THE PILGRIM KAMANITA

A LEGENDARY ROMANCE

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"This narrative is not meant for narration."

BYRON, *Don Juan*, xiv. 7.

I

THE LORD BUDDHA REVISITS THE CITY OF THE FIVE HILLS

"This have I heard: That the time came when the earthly sojourn of the Lord Buddha should be ended, and journeying from place to place in the land of Magadha, he came to Rajagriha."

Thus the Holy Buddhist Sutra of ancient India.

. . . .

As the Master drew near to the City of the Five Hills, day was almost over, and the mildly beneficent rays of the evening sun lay along the green rice-fields and meadows of the far-reaching plain as if they were emanations from a divine hand extended in blessing. Here and there little billowy clouds—of purest gold dust as it seemed—rolled and crept along the ground, showing that men and oxen were plodding wearily homeward from their labour in the fields; and the lengthening shadows cast by isolated groups of trees were bordered by a halo, radiant with all the colours of the rainbow. Framed in a wreath of blossoming gardens, the embattled gateways, terraces, cupolas, and towers of the capital shone forth, delicately clear as in some fairy vision; and a long line of rocky eminences, rivalling in colour the topaz, the amethyst, and

the opal, were resolved into an enamel of incomparable beauty.

Deeply moved, the Lord Buddha stayed his steps. Joy welled up within him, and his heart leaped forth to greet those familiar forms, bound up for him with so many memories: the Grey Horn, the Broad Vale, the Seer's Crag, the Vulture's Crest—"whose noble summit towers, roof-like, over all the rest"—and, above all, Vibhara, the Mountain of the Hot Springs, under whose shadow, in the cave beneath the Sattapanni tree, the homeless wanderer had found his first home, his first resting-place on the final journey from Sansara to Nirvana.

For when, in that bygone time, "being still in the flower of his life, his hair dark and glossy, in the unimpaired enjoyment of all that happy youth could afford and early manhood represent, unmoved by the wishes of his parents as by their tears and lamentations," he had left his royal father's house in the northern country of the Sakyas and turned his steps toward the valley of the Gunga, he had there, under the shadow of the lofty Vibhara, allowed himself his first lengthened stay, going every morning into Rajagriha to beg for food.

It was at that time also, and in that very cave, that Bimbisara, King of Magadha, had visited him, imploring, though in vain, that he should return to the home of his fathers, and to the life of the world, until at length the royal visitor, strangely moved by the words of the young ascetic, felt the first tremblings of the new faith that later made him a follower of the Buddha.

Since that day full fifty years had passed away, and in the interval he had changed not alone the course of his own life, but also that of the world. How vast the difference between that past, when he dwelt in yonder cave and

sat beneath the Sattapanni tree, and the present! Then he was yet a seeker — one struggling for salvation. Terrible spiritual contests lay before him—year-long, self-inflicted mortifications, inhuman agonies, frightful as fruitless, the mere recital of which made the flesh of even the stoutest-hearted of his hearers creep; till at length, risen triumphant above all such self-torturing asceticism, through fervent meditation, he reached the light, and went forth from the conflict, consecrated to the salvation of all created beings, filled with a divine pity, a supreme and perfect Buddha. Those were the years in which his life resembled a changeful morning in the rainy season—dazzling sunshine alternating with deepest gloom, the while the monsoon piles cloud above cloud in towering masses, and the death-laden thunderstorm comes growling nearer. But now his life was filled with the same calm, sunny peace that lay upon the evening landscape, a peace that seemed to grow ever deeper and clearer as the sun's disc dipped towards the horizon.

For him, too, sunset, the close of life's long day, was at hand. He had finished his work. The kingdom of truth had been established on sure foundations, and the doctrine of salvation proclaimed to all mankind; while many monks and nuns of blameless life and approved knowledge, and lay followers of both sexes, were now well fitted to guard his kingdom and to uphold and spread its doctrines.

And even as he stands there, there abides in his heart, as a result of the meditations of this day spent in solitary journeying, the inalienable knowledge: "For thee, the time cometh, and that soon, when thou shalt go hence and leave this world, from which thou hast redeemed thyself and all who come after thee, and shalt enter into the rest of Nirvana."

And looking over the land spread out before him, with a happy recognition, in which there lay, nevertheless, a deep note of sadness, he bade these loved objects farewell.

"Fair indeed art thou, Rajagriha, City of the Five Hills! Beautiful are thy environs, richly blessed thy fields, heart-gladdening thy wooded glades gleaming with waters, very pleasant thy clustering hills of rock! For the last time do I behold thy lovely borders from this, the fairest of all places whence thy children love to look upon thee. But once, and once only—on the day when I go hence and look back from the crest of yonder mountain-ridge—shall I see thee again, beloved valley of Rajagriha; then, nevermore!"

And still the Master stood, till at length only two structures, of all in the city before him, towered golden in the sunlight: one, the highest tower in the king's palace, whence Bimbisara had first espied him, when, a young and unknown ascetic, he passed that way, and, by his noble bearing, drew upon himself the notice of the Magadha king; the other, the domelike superstructure of the Indian temple, in which, in the years before his teaching had delivered mankind from bloody superstition, thousands upon thousands of innocent animals were yearly slaughtered in honour of the Deity. Finally, even the pinnacles of the towers slipped down into the rising sea of shadow and were lost to view, and only the cone of golden umbrellas[1] which, rising one above another, crowned the dome of the temple yet glowed, suspended as it were in mid-air, a veritable symbol of the "royal city,"[2] flashing and sparkling as the red glow deepened against the dark-blue background of the lofty tree-tops. At this point the Master caught sight of

[1] The golden umbrella is the emblem of royalty.

[2] Rajagriha = "royal city," now Rajgir, ten miles south-east of Patna.

the still somewhat distant goal of his journey. For the tree-tops he saw were those of the mango grove on the farther side of the town, the gift of his disciple Jivaka, the king's physician, in which a stately monastery provided the monks with quarters at once healthy and comfortable.

To this home of the Order, the Lord Buddha had sent the monks who accompanied him—about 200 in number—on before, under the leadership of his cousin and faithful companion Ananda, because he felt desirous of tasting the deep delight of a day's solitary pilgrimage. And he was aware that a band of young monks from the West, led by his great disciple the wise Sariputta, would arrive in the mango grove at sunset. In his vivid imagination, given to picturing events in all their details, he went over the scenes that would be enacted. He saw the new arrivals exchange friendly greetings with the brethren already there, saw them conducted by the latter to seats and night quarters, their cloaks and alms-bowls taken from them, and heard all this take place with much noise and loud shouting, as though fisher-folk were quarrelling over their spoils. He knew this to be no exaggeration; and to him, who loved silent meditation, and disliked clamour as does the solitary lion in the jungle, the thought of being involved, just at this moment, in such bustle, after the delicious restfulness of solitary travel and the blessed peace of the evening landscape, was doubly distressing.

So he determined, as he went on his way, that he would not go through the city to his mango grove, but would take up his abode for the night in any house in the nearest suburb in which he could find shelter.

Meantime the flaming gold of the western heavens had died down in burning orange tints, and these, in turn, had melted into a blaze of the fieriest scarlet. Round about

him the green of the fields deepened and grew more and more luminous, as though the earth were an emerald lit up from within. But already a dreamy violet haze enveloped the horizon, while a weird purple flood—whether light or shadow, no one could say—rolled in from every side, rising and sinking, filling all space, dissolving fixed outlines and combining fragments, sweeping near objects bodily away and bringing nearer those that were distant, causing everything to undulate and waver in trembling uncertainty.

Startled by the footsteps of the solitary wanderer, a fruit-bat unhooked itself from the branch of a black sala tree, and, spreading its leathern wings, swept, with a shrill cry, away through the dusk, to pay a visit to the orchards of the rural suburb.

Thus, by the time the Master had reached the outskirts of Rajagriha, the day was far spent and night was at hand.

II

THE MEETING

It was the intention of the Master to stop at the first house he came to—in this instance a building whose blue walls shone out from between the trees of the surrounding garden. As he was about to approach the door, however, he became aware of a net hung upon a branch. And without a moment's hesitation the Lord Buddha strode past, abhorring the house of the fowler. Here, at the extreme outskirts of the town, the houses were scattered, in addition to which a conflagration had recently swept the place, so that some time elapsed before he came to another human habitation. It was the farmhouse of a well-to-do Brahman. The Master had hardly stepped within the gate, when he heard the loud screaming voices of the Brahman's two wives as they scolded and wrangled, all the while hurling invectives at one another. And the Blessed One turned him about, went out at the gateway, and strode farther on.

The pleasure garden of the rich Brahman extended for a considerable distance along the road. The Master was already conscious of fatigue, and his right foot, injured by a sharp stone, pained him as he paced along. In this condition he approached the next dwelling-house, which was visible from a great distance owing to a broad path of vivid light that streamed across the road from the lattice-work of the shutters and from the open door. Even had

a blind man come that way, he could not have failed to notice this house, for wanton laughter, the clang of goblets, the clapping of hands, the beat of dancing feet, and the delightfully merry notes of the seven-stringed vina rose clearly upon the air. Leaning against the doorpost stood a handsome girl, robed in rich silk, and hung with jasmine garlands. Laughingly showing her teeth, red from chewing the betel-nut, she invited the wayfarer to stay: "Enter, O stranger. This is the House of Mirth." But the Blessed One went on his way, and as he did so he recalled his own words: "As weeping, in the Order of the Holy, shall singing be looked on; as madness, in the Order of the Holy, shall dancing be looked on; as childish, in the Order of the Holy, shall unseemly showing of teeth, shall laughter, be looked on. All-sufficing, for ye who in truth are enraptured, be the smile of the smiling eyes."

The neighbouring house was not far distant, but the noise of the carousers and vina-players penetrated thither, so the Lord Buddha went on to the next. Beside it two butcher's assistants were hard at work by the last glimmer of daylight, cutting up with sharp knives a cow they had just slaughtered. And the Master strode past the house of the butcher.

In front of the one following, stood many dishes and bowls freshly formed from clay, the fruit of a diligent day's labour. The potter's wheel stood under a tamarind tree, and the potter at that moment removed a dish from the wheel and bore it to where the others lay.

The Master approached the potter, greeted him courteously, and said: "If it be not inconvenient to thee, O descendant of Bhaga, I shall spend this night in thy hall."

"It is not, O sir, inconvenient to me. But this moment, a pilgrim has arrived, tired from a long journey, and he has already taken up his quarters for the night. If it be agreeable to him, thou art welcome to stay, O sir, at thine own pleasure."

And the Master reflected: "Solitude is, it is true, the best of all companions. But this good pilgrim has arrived here late, just as I myself, tired from long wandering. And he has gone by the houses where men follow impure and bloody pursuits, past the house of wrangling and of odious strife, the house of clamour and of unworthy pleasure, and has not rested till he entered the house of the potter. In the company of such a man it is possible to spend the night."

So the Lord Buddha entered the outer hall, where he perceived a young man of noble lineaments sitting in a corner on a mat.

"If it be not disagreeable to thee, O pilgrim," said the Master to him, "I shall spend the night in this outer hall."

"Spacious, O brother, is the hall of the potter; stay then, O venerable sir, at thy pleasure."

Upon which the Master spread his mat close to one of the walls and sat down, his legs crossed, his body perfectly upright, sunk in holy meditation. And the Blessed One remained sitting during the first part of the night.

The young man also remained sitting during the first part of the night.

Seeing which, the Lord Buddha thought to himself: "I wonder whether this noble youth is a happy seeker after truth. How would it be if I should ask him?"

So he turned him to the young pilgrim—

"Wherefore, O pilgrim, hast thou become homeless?"

The young pilgrim answered—

"But few hours of the night are as yet gone. So that, if thou, venerable sir, wilt deign to give ear, I shall tell thee wherefore I have chosen the portion of the homeless."

The Blessed One gave assent by a friendly movement of his head, and the young pilgrim began his tale.

III

TO THE BANKS OF THE GUNGA

MY name is Kamanita. I was born in Ujjeni, a town lying far to the south, in the land of Avanti, among the mountains. My father was a merchant, and rich, though our family could lay claim to no special rank. He gave me a good education, and, when of age to assume the Sacrificial Cord, I was already possessed of most of the accomplishments which befit a young man of position, so that people generally believed I must have been educated in Takkasila.[1] I could wrestle and fence with the best. My voice was melodious and well trained, and I was able to play the vina with considerable artistic skill: I could repeat all the poems of Bharata by heart; and many others also. With the mysteries of metre I was most intimately acquainted, and was myself able to write verses replete with feeling and ingenious thought. I could draw and paint so that few surpassed me, and my originality in the art of strewing flowers was universally lauded. I had attained to an unusual mastery in the colouring of crystals, and, furthermore, could tell at sight whence any jewel came. My parrots and parson-birds I trained so that none spoke as they. And to all these accomplishments I added a thorough command of the game of chess with its sixty-four squares, of the wand game, of archery, of

[1] The Oxford of ancient India, lying in the Punjab.

ball games of every description, of riddles, and of flower games. So that it became, O stranger, a proverbial saying in Ujjeni: "Talented as the young Kamanita."

When I was twenty years old, my father one day sent for me, and spoke as follows:

"My son, thy education is now completed; it is time for thee to see something of the world and to begin thy merchant career. A suitable opportunity has just offered itself. Within the next few days our monarch sends an embassy to King Udena in Kosambi, which lies far to the north. There I have a friend named Panada, with whom I have at various times exchanged hospitalities. He has long told me that in Kosambi there is good business to be done in the products of our land, particularly in rock crystals and sandal powder, as also in artistic wicker-work and woven goods. I have always, however, shunned such a business journey, holding it to be an altogether too hazardous undertaking, on account of the many dangers of the road; but for any one going there and back in the train of the embassy there can be no danger whatsoever. So now, my son, we had better go to the warehouse and inspect the twelve wagons with their teams of oxen and the goods which I have decided on for thy journey. In exchange for the latter thou art to bring back muslin from Benares and carefully selected rice; and that will be the beginning, and I trust a splendid one, of thy business career. Then thou wilt have an opportunity of seeing foreign lands with natural characteristics other than thine own, and other customs, and wilt have daily intercourse with courtiers, men of the highest station and most refined manners, all of which I consider a great gain, for a merchant must be a man of the world."

I thanked my father with tears of joy, and a few days later bade farewell to my parents and home.

With what joyful anticipation did my heart beat as, at the head of my wagons, I passed out at the city gates, a member of this magnificent procession, and the wide world lay open before me! Each day of the journey was to me like a festival, and when the camp fires blazed up in the evenings to scare the panthers and tigers away, and I sat in the circle by the side of the ambassador, with men of years and rank, it seemed to me that I was altogether in fairy-land.

Through the magnificent forest region of Vedisa and over the gently swelling heights of the Vindhya mountains we reached the vast northern plain, and there an entirely new world opened itself out before me, for I had hitherto never imagined that the earth was so flat and so huge.

It was about a month after our setting out that, one glorious evening, we saw, from a palm-covered eminence, two golden bands, which, disengaging themselves from the mists on the horizon, threaded the illimitable green beneath and gradually approached each other till they became united in one broad zone.

A hand touched my shoulder.

It was the ambassador, who had approached me unperceived.

"Those, Kamanita, are the sacred Jumna and the divine Gunga whose waters unite before our eyes."

Involuntarily I raised my hands in adoration.

"Thou dost well to greet them in this way," my patron went on. "For if the Gunga comes from the home of the gods amid the snow-clad mountains of the North and flows as it were from the Abode of the Eternal, yet the Jumna, on the other hand, takes its rise in lands known

to far-distant heroic days, and its floods have reflected the ruins of Hastinapura, 'the City of Elephants,' and washed the plain where the Pándavas and the Kauravas struggled for the mastery, where Karna raged in his tent, where Krishna himself guided the steeds of Arjuna—but of all that I need not remind thee, seeing that thou art thyself at home in the ancient heroic songs. Often have I stood on yonder projecting tongue of land when the blue waves of the Jumna have rolled onward side by side with the yellow waters of the Gunga, and blue and yellow have never mingled. Blue and Yellow, Warrior and Brahman in the great river-bed of Caste, passing onward to eternity, approaching—uniting—for ever side by side—for ever two. Then it seemed to me that, blent with the rushing of these blue floods, I heard warlike sounds—the clash of arms and the blowing of horns, neighing of horses and the trumpeting of war elephants—and my heart beat faster, for my ancestors also had been there, and the sands of Kurukshetra had drunk their heroic blood."

Full of admiration, I looked up to this man from the warrior caste, in whose family such memories lived.

But he took me by the hand, and saying, "Come, my son, and behold the goal of thy first journey," he led me but a few steps around some dense shrubbery that had hitherto hidden the view to the east.

As it flashed upon my vision I uttered an involuntary cry of admiration, for there, at a bend of the broad Gunga, lay, great and splendid in its beauty, the city of Kosambi. With its walls and towers, its piled-up masses of houses, its terraces, its quays and ghâts lit up by the setting sun, it really looked like a city of red gold—a city such as Benares was until the sins of its inhabitants changed it to stone and mortar—while the cupolas that were of real gold

shone like so many suns. Columns of smoke, dark red brown from the temple courts above, light blue from the funeral pyres on the banks below, rose straight into the air; and borne aloft on these, as if it were a canopy, there hung over the whole a veil woven of the tenderest tints of mother-of-pearl, while in the background, flung forth in the wildest profusion, flashed and burned every hue of heaven. On the sacred stream which imaged all this glory and multiplied it a thousandfold in the shimmer of its waters, rocked countless boats, gay with many-coloured sails and streamers; and, distant though we were, we could yet see the broad stairs of the ghâts[1] swarming with people, and numerous bathers already plashing in the sparkling waves beneath. A sound of joyous movement, floating out upon the air like the busy hum of innumerable bees, was borne up to us from time to time.

As thou canst imagine, I felt I was looking upon a city of the thirty-three gods, rather than one of human beings; indeed, the whole valley of the Gunga with its luxuriant richness looked to us, men of the hills, like Paradise. And of a truth, this very place, of all others on earth, was to be Paradise Revealed to me.

That same night I slept under the hospitable roof of Panada, my father's old friend.

Early on the following day, I hurried to the nearest ghât, and descended, with feelings which I cannot attempt to describe, into the sacred waters which should not only cleanse me from the dust of my journey but from my sins as well. These were, owing to my youth, of no great gravity; but I filled a large bottle from the river to take

[1] Landing-stage with magnificent flights of steps for bathers—ordinarily varied by projections and kiosks and crowned by a monumental arch or gateway.

to my father. Alas! it never came into his possession, as thou wilt later learn.

The good Panada, a grey-haired old gentleman of venerable appearance, now conducted me to the markets of the city, and, with his friendly assistance, I was able, in the course of the next few days, to sell my wares at a good profit, and to lay in an abundance of those products of the northern plain which are so highly prized among our people.

My business was thus brought to a happy conclusion long before the embassy had begun to think of getting ready to start on its return journey; and I was in no way sorry, for I had now full liberty to see the town and to enjoy its pleasures, which I did to the full, in the company of Somadatta, the son of my host.

IV

THE MAIDEN BALL-PLAYER

ONE delightful afternoon we betook ourselves to a public garden outside of the town—a really magnificent park it was, lying close to the high banks of the Gunga, with shady groups of trees, large lotus ponds, marble summer-houses, and jasmine arbours, in which at this hour of the day life and bustle reigned supreme. Here we were gently rocked in a golden swing by the attendants, while with ravished hearts we listened to the lovesick notes of the kokila and the sweet chatter of the green parrots. All at once there rose on the air the merry tinkling of anklets, and instantly my friend sprang out of the swing and called to me—

"Look, Kamanita! The fairest maidens in Kosambi are just approaching, virgins specially chosen from the richest and most noble houses, come to do honour to the goddess who dwells on the Vindhayas by engaging in ball games. Thou canst count thyself fortunate, my friend, for at this game we may see them without restraint. Come, let us not miss the chance."

Naturally, I waited for no second bidding, but made haste to follow.

On a spacious stage decorated with precious stones, the maidens appeared at once, ready for the game. And, if it must be acknowledged that it was a rare sight to behold this galaxy of fair young creatures in all their glory

of shimmering silk, airy muslin veils, of pearls, sparkling jewels and gold bangles, what must be said of the game itself that gave to all these gracious limbs such varied opportunities of displaying their wealth of subtle beauty in the most charming of positions and movements? And yet that was, as it were, but a prologue. For when these gazelle-eyed worshippers had entertained us for a considerable time with games of the most varied description, they all stepped back, save one, who remained alone in the centre of the jewelled stage: in the centre of the stage, and—in the centre of my heart.

Ah! my friend, what shall I say? To talk of her beauty would be audacity! I should need to be a poet like Bharata himself to conjure up to your fancy even a faint reflection of it. Let it suffice that this maiden, with the gentle radiance of the moon in her face, was of faultless form and glowed in every limb with the freshness of youth; that I felt her to be the incarnate goddess of Fortune and Beauty; and that every smallest hair on my body quivered with delight as I beheld her.

Presently she began, in honour of the goddess whom she so fitly represented, a performance worthy of a great artist. Dropping the ball easily on the stage, as it slowly rose she gave it, with flower-like hand, thumb slightly bent, and tender fingers outstretched, a sharp downward blow, then struck it, as it rebounded, with the back of her hand and caught it again in mid-air as it fell. She tossed it in slow, in moderate, in quick time, now inciting it to rapid motion, anon gently quieting it. Then striking it alternately with the right hand and with the left, she drove it towards every point of the compass and caught it as it returned. If thou art really acquainted with the mysteries of ball-play—as it seemeth to me from the intelligence of

thine expression thou art—I need only tell thee that thou hast probably never seen the Curnapada and the Gitamarga so perfectly mastered.

Then she did something that I had never seen, and of which I had not even heard. She took, I must tell thee, two golden balls, and while her feet moved in the dance to the tinkling of the jewels she wore, she made the balls spring so rapidly in lightning-like lines, that one saw but, as it were, the golden bars of a cage in which a wondrous bird hopped daintily to and fro.

It was at this point that our eyes suddenly met.

And to this day, O stranger, I do not understand how it was that I did not instantly drop dead, to be reborn in a heaven of bliss. It may well be, however, that my deeds done in a former life, the fruits of which I have to enjoy in this, were not yet exhausted. Indeed, this balance from my wanderings in the past has, in very truth, carried me safely through various mortal dangers down to the present day, and will, I trust and expect, suffice for a long time to come.

But to return. At this instant one of the balls, which had hitherto been so obedient to her, escaped and flew in a mighty curve down from the stage. Many young folks rushed to seize it. I reached it at the same moment as another youthful, richly dressed man, and we flew at one another, because neither was willing to yield it. Owing to my absolute familiarity with the tricks of the wrestler, I succeeded in tripping him up; but he, in order to hold me back, caught at the crystal chain which I wore round my neck, and to which an amulet was attached. The chain snapped, he went crashing to the earth, and I secured the ball. In a fury, he sprang up and hurled the chain at my feet. The amulet was a tiger-eye, no very specially

precious stone, yet it was an infallible safeguard against the evil eye; and now, just as his lighted upon me, I must needs be without it. But what mattered that to me? Did I not hold in my hand the ball which a moment before her lily-hand had touched? And at once, as a highly skilled player should, I succeeded in pitching it with so accurate an aim that it came down just in front of one corner of the stage, and, rising again with a gentle movement, landed, as if tamed, within reach of the fair player, who had not for a moment ceased to keep the other in motion, and who now wove herself again into her golden cage, amid the wild jubilation of the numerous spectators. With that the ball-play in honour of the goddess Lakshmi came to an end, the maidens disappeared from the stage, and we turned our steps homeward.

On the way, my friend remarked it was fortunate that I had no purpose to serve at court; for the young man from whom I had captured the ball was no less a personage than the son of the Minister of State, and every one had noticed from his looks that he had sworn undying hatred to me. That did not move me in the least; how much rather had I learned who my goddess was. I fought shy of asking, however; in fact, when Somadatta wanted to tease me about the fair one, I even made as if I were perfectly indifferent, praised with the language of a connoisseur the finish of her play, but added, at the same time, that we had in my native town lady-players at least as skilful—while in my heart of hearts I begged the incomparable one to pardon this my falsehood.

I need hardly say that night brought no sleep to my eyes, which I only closed in order to be possessed anew by the blissful vision I had seen. The following day I spent in a corner of my host's garden, far removed from all the noise

of day, where the sandy soil under a mango-tree ministered cooling to my love-tortured body, my only companion the seven-stringed vina, to which I confided my longing. As soon, however, as the lessening heat permitted my going out, I persuaded Somadatta to drive with me to the public gardens although he would have greatly preferred to be present at a quail fight. In vain, however, did I wander through the whole park. Many maidens were there, everywhere engaged in games as though bent on luring me with false hopes from one spot to another, but that peerless one —Lakshmi's very image—was not among them.

Bitterly disappointed I now made as though I were possessed by an irresistible longing again to enjoy the strangely fascinating life of the Gunga. We visited all the ghâts, and finally got into a boat in order to make one of the light-hearted flotilla which, evening by evening, rocked to and fro on the waves of the sacred stream, and I lingered till the play of light and the golden glow of evening were extinguished and the blaze of torches and the glimmer of lanterns danced and whirled on its glassy surface.

Then at last I was obliged to give up my silent but none the less passionate hope and bid my boatman steer for the nearest ghât.

After a sleepless night, I remained in my room, and in order to occupy and relieve my mind, which was utterly possessed by her image, till I should again be able to hasten to the public gardens, I sought with the aid of brush and colour to transfer to the tablet on my wall, her fair lineaments as I last beheld them, when, dancing, she struck the golden ball. I was unable to eat a morsel; for even as the Çakora with its exquisitely tender song lives only upon the rays of the moon, so did I live solely upon the rays that emanated from her whose face was as the moon in its

fairness, though these came to me but through the mists of memory; yet I hoped, and that confidently, they would this evening in the pleasure gardens refresh and vivify me with all their glow and radiance. Alas! I was again doomed to disappointment.

Afterwards Somadatta wished to take me to the gaming-tables, for he was as passionately addicted to dice as Nala, after the demon Kali had entered into him. I feigned tiredness.

Instead, however, of going home, I betook myself again to the ghâts and out on the river; but, to my unspeakable grief, with no better result than on the preceding evening.

V

THE MAGIC PORTRAIT

As I knew that for me sleep was not to be thought of, I did not undress at all that evening, but sat down at the head of my bed on the grass mat intended for devotional exercises, and spent the night there in pious and fitting fashion, filled with fervent love thoughts, and absorbed in prayer to the lotus-bearing Lakshmi, *her* celestial prototype; but the early morning sun found me again at work with brush and colour.

Several hours had flown away as if on wings while I was thus occupied, when Somadatta entered the room. I had but just time, when I heard him coming, to thrust the panel and painting materials under the bed. I did it quite involuntarily.

Somadatta took a low chair, sat down beside me, and looked at me with a smile on his face.

"I perceive of a truth," he said, "that our house is to have the honour of being the spiritual birthplace of a holy man. Thou fastest as do only the most strenuous ascetics, and dost refrain from the luxurious bed. For neither on thy pillows nor on thy mattress is there to be seen the faintest impress of thy body and the white sheet is without a crease. Nevertheless, although as the result of thy fasting thou art already grown quite slim, thy body is not yet entirely devoid of weight, as the curious may see from this grass matting on which thou hast obviously spent the night in

prayer and meditation. But I find that, for so holy a tenant, this room looks somewhat too worldly. Here on thy toilet table the salve jar—untouched, it is true; the box of sandal powder; the flagon of scented water and the dish with bark of the citron tree and betel! There on the wall, the wreath of yellow amaranths, and the lute, but—where is the panel which usually hangs on that hook?"

In my embarrassment I was unable to frame any answer to this question, and he meanwhile discovered the missing board, and drew it forth from under the bed.

"Why! why! what wicked and crafty wizard!" he cried, "has caused the fascinating picture of a maiden playing ball to appear by magic on the board which I myself hung quite empty on yonder hook?—plainly, with evil intent, to assail the embryo ascetic and tempt him at the very beginning of his career, and thus to confound sense and thought in him. Or, after all, can it be that this is the work of a god?—for we know, as a fact, that the gods fear the omnipotence of the great ascetics; and, commencing as thou hast done, the Vindhya Mountains might well begin to belch smoke at the fervency of thy penitence; yea, owing to the accumulation of thy merit, the kingdom of the heavenly deities might almost begin to totter. And now I also know which deity it is! It is certainly he whom we name the Invisible, the god with the flower darts, who bears a fish in his banner —Kama, the god of love, from whom thou hast thy name, as I now remember. And—heavens, what do I see? —this is Vasitthi, the daughter of the rich goldsmith!"

As I thus, for the first time, heard the name of my beloved, my heart began to beat violently and my face grew pale from agitation.

"I see, my dear friend," this incorrigible jester went on, "that the idea of the magic of Kama hath given thee a great fright, and, truly, we shall be obliged to do something in order to avert his anger. In such a case, however, I feel that woman's counsel is not to be despised. I shall show this picture to my beloved Medini, who was also of those at the dance and who is, furthermore, the foster-sister of the fair Vasitthi."

With that, he was about to go away, taking the panel with him. Perceiving, however, what the rogue had in mind, I bade him wait, as the picture still lacked an inscription. I mixed some beautiful red of a brilliant hue and in a few minutes had written, in the daintiest of script, a verse of four lines which related in simple language the incident of the golden ball. The verse, when read backwards, stated that the ball with which she had played, was my heart, which I myself sent back to her even at the risk of her rejecting it. It was possible, however, to read the verse perpendicularly through the lines, and when so read, from top to bottom, it voiced in saddest words the despair into which my separation from her had plunged me; did one read it in the opposite direction, then the reader learned that nevertheless I dared to hope.

But of all that I conveyed to her in such surreptitious fashion, I said nothing, so that Somadatta was by no means enchanted with this specimen of my poetic skill. It seemed to him much too simple, and he informed me that I ought certainly to mention how the god Kama, alarmed at my asceticism, had by his magic skill created this picture with which to tempt me and that by it I had been wholly vanquished—Somadatta, like so many others, being most of all taken with his own wit.

After he had carried off the picture, I felt myself in a particularly exalted and energetic frame of mind, for a step had now been taken which, in its consequences, might lead to the longed-for goal of all my happiness. I was now able to eat and drink, and, after a light meal, I took down the vina from the wall and drew from its chords melodies that were sometimes no more than tuneful sighs, but anon grew exulting and joyous, while I repeated the heavenly name of Vasitthi in a thousand endearing accents.

So Somadatta found me when a few hours later he came in with the picture in his hand. "The ball-playing destroyer of thy peace has also betaken herself to verse," said he, "but I cannot say that I am able to find great store of matter in what she has written, although the handwriting may be considered unusually pretty."

And it was indeed pretty. I saw before me—with what joy of heart, how shall I say?—a second verse of four lines written in characters like sprays of tender blossoms swayed by summer zephyrs, and looking as if they had been breathed upon the picture. Somadatta had, of course, been unable to find any meaning in them, for they referred solely to that which he had not perceived, and showed me that my fair one had correctly read my strophe in every direction—backwards, upwards, and downwards. It gave me an exalted idea of her education and knowledge, no less than did the revelation of her rare spirit in the graciously humorous turn she gave to my fiery declaration, which she chose to accept as a piece of gallantry or an effusion to which too much importance should not be attached.

I now attempted, I confess, to read her verse in the criss-cross fashion which had been possible with mine, in the

hope that I might find in it a covert confession or other secret message, perhaps even the invitation to a rendezvous, but in vain. And I told myself at once that this was in truth but a convincing proof of the highest and most refined feminine virtue; my darling showed me that she was perfectly capable of understanding the subtlety and daring ways of the masculine mind but could not be induced to imitate them.

Besides which I found immediate comfort for my disappointed expectations in Somadatta's next words.

"But this fair one with the beautiful brows, if she be no great poetess, has really a good heart. She knows that for a long time I have not seen her foster-sister, my beloved Medini, save at large social gatherings, where only the eyes may speak and even these but by stealth. And so she has arranged a meeting for to-morrow night, on the terrace of her father's palace. To-night, it is, I regret to say, not possible, as her father gives a banquet; so till to-morrow we must have patience. Perhaps thou wouldst like to accompany me on this adventure?"

As he said this, he laughed with much slyness and I laughed with him, and assured him that he should have my company. In the best of humours we took the chess-board which was leaning against the wall and were about to beguile the time by engaging in this animating game when a man-servant came in and announced that a stranger wished to speak with me.

In the entrance Hall I found the ambassador's servant, who informed me that I must prepare for departure and come to the courtyard of the palace that very night, bringing my wagons, in order to be able to start with the first glimmer of daylight on the morrow.

My despair knew no bounds. I imagined I must in

some mysterious way have offended one of the deities. As soon as I was able to collect my thoughts I dashed away to the ambassador and filled his ears with lies about some business that I had not yet arranged, and that could not possibly be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in so short a time. With hot tears I besought him to put off the journey for but a single day.

" But thou saidst eight days ago that thou wert ready," he replied.

I assured him that afterwards, and quite unexpectedly, the opportunity of gaining a valuable prize had presented itself. And that was indeed no falsehood, for what gain could mean more to me than the conquest of this incomparable maiden ?

So I finally succeeded in wiling this one day from him.

The hours of the next day wore quickly away, filled as they were with the preparations necessary for our journey, so that the time, in spite of my longing, did not drag. When evening came, our carts stood loaded in the courtyard. Everything was prepared for yoking in the oxen, so that, as soon as I should appear—that is, before daybreak—we might be able to start.

VI

ON THE TERRACE OF THE SORROWLESS

Now that night and darkness had come, we betook ourselves, Somadatta and I, clad in dark apparel which we had gathered well up about us, our loins firmly belted, and with swords in our hands, to the western side of the palatial house of the goldsmith, where, crowning the steep and rocky side of a deep ravine, lay the terrace we sought. With the help of a bamboo pole which we had brought with us, and by a dexterous use of the few existing projections, we climbed the face of the rock at a spot veiled in deep shadow, got over the wall with ease, and found ourselves on a spacious terrace decorated with palms, asoka trees, and magnificent flowering plants of every description, which, now bathed in the silver light of the moon, lay spread out before us.

Not far away, beside a young girl on a garden bench, and looking like a visitant from the spheres in her wonderful likeness to Lakshmi, sat the great-eyed maiden who played ball with my heart; and, at the sight, I began to tremble so violently that I was obliged to lean against the parapet, the touch of whose marble cooled and quieted my fevered and drooping senses.

Meanwhile Somadatta hastened to his beloved, who had sprung up with a low cry.

Seeing which, I also pulled myself together so far as to be able to approach the incomparable one. She, to all

appearance surprised at the arrival of a stranger, had risen and seemed undecided as to whether she should go or stay, the while her eyes, like those of a startled young antelope, shot sidelong glances at me, and her body quivered like a tendril swaying in a gentle breeze. As for me, I stood in steadily increasing confusion, with disordered locks, and tell-tale eyes, and was barely able to stammer the few words in which I told her how much I appreciated the unhoped-for happiness of meeting her here. But she, when she noticed my great shyness, seemed herself to become calmer. She sat down on the bench again, and invited me with a gentle movement of her lotus-hand to take a seat beside her; and then, in a voice full of tremulous sweetness, assured me that she was very glad to be able to thank me for having flung the ball back to her with such skill that the game suffered no interruption; for, had that happened, the whole merit of her performance would have been lost and the goddess so clumsily honoured would have visited her anger upon her, or would at least have sent her no happiness. To which I replied that she owed me no thanks as I had at the very most but made good my own default, and, as she did not seem to understand what I meant by that, I ventured to remind her of the meeting of our eyes and of the ensuing confusion which caused her to fail in her stroke so that the ball flew away. But she reddened violently and absolutely refused to acknowledge such a thing,—what should have confused her in that?

"I imagine," I answered, "that from my eyes, which must have rivalled flowers in full blossom then, such a sweet odour of admiration streamed forth that for a moment thou wast stupefied and so thy hand went beside the ball."

"Eh! eh! what talk is that of thine about admira-

tion?" she retorted, "thou art accustomed at home to see much more skilful players."

From which remark I gathered with satisfaction that I had been talked of and that the words I had used to Somadatta had been accurately repeated. But I grew hot and then cold at the thought that I had spoken almost slightingly, and I hastened to assure her that there was not one word of truth in my statement, and that I had only spoken so in order not to betray my precious secret to my friend. But she wouldn't believe that, or made as if she didn't, and, in speaking of it, I happily forgot my bashfulness, grew passionately eager to convince her, and told her how, at sight of her, the Love God had rained his flower darts upon me. "I was convinced," I said, "that in a former existence she had been my wife—whence otherwise could such a sudden and irresistible love have arisen? But if that were so, then she must not less have recognised in me her former husband, and a like love must have sprung up in her breast also."

With such audacious words did I impetuously besiege her, till at length she hid her burning and tearful cheek on my breast, and acknowledged in words that were scarce audible that it had been with her as with me, and that she would surely have died had not her foster-sister most opportunely brought her the picture.

Then we kissed and fondled one another countless times, and felt as if we should expire for joy until suddenly the thought of my impending departure fell like a dark shadow athwart my happiness and forced a deep sigh from me.

Dismayed, Vasitthi asked why I sighed—but when I told her of the cause, she sank back on the bench in a fainting condition, and broke into a perfect tempest of

tears and heart-rending sobs. Vain were all my attempts to comfort my heart's dearest. In vain did I assure her that so soon as the rainy season was over, I would return and never again leave her, even if I had to take service as a day labourer in Kosambi. Spoken to the winds were all my assurances that my despair at the separation was not less than her own, and that only stern, inexorable necessity tore me away from her so soon. She was scarcely able between her sobs to utter the few words needed to ask why it was so imperative to go away as early as to-morrow, just as we had found one another. But when I then explained it all to her very exactly and with every detail, she seemed neither to hear nor to comprehend a syllable. " Oh, she saw perfectly that I was longing to get back to my native town where there were many more beautiful maidens than she, who were also far more skilful ball-players, as I had myself acknowledged."

I might affirm, protest, and swear what I chose—she adhered to her assertion, and ever more copiously flowed her tears. Can any one wonder that I shortly thereafter lay at her feet, covering the hand that hung limply down with kisses and tears, and that I promised not to leave her ? And who was then more blissful than I, when Vasitthi flung her soft arms around me, and kissed me again and again, laughing and crying for joy ? It is true she now instantly said, " There, thou seest, it was not at all so necessary for thee to travel away, for then thou wouldst unquestionably have had to go." But when I set myself once more to explain everything clearly to her, she closed my mouth with a kiss and said that she knew I loved her and that she did not really mean what she had said of the girls in my native town. Filled with tender caresses and sweet confidences, the hours flew by as in

a dream, and there would have been no end to all our bliss had not Somadatta and Medini suddenly appeared to tell us that it was high time to think of returning home.

In the courtyard at Somadatta's we found everything ready for my setting out. I called the overseer of the ox-wagons to me, and — bidding him use the utmost dispatch—sent him to the ambassador, with the information that my business was, I was sorry to say, not yet entirely settled and that I must, as a consequence, relinquish the idea of making the journey under the escort of the embassy. My one request was that he would be so good as give my love to my parents, and therewith I commended myself to his favour.

Scarcely had I stretched myself on my bed, in order—if possible—to enjoy a few hours' sleep—when the ambassador himself entered. Thoroughly dismayed, I bowed deeply before him, while he, in a somewhat surly voice, asked what this unheard-of behaviour meant,—I was to come with him at once.

In reply, I was about to speak of my still unfinished business, but he stopped me peremptorily.

"What nonsense! Business! Enough of such lies. Dost thou suppose I should not know what kind of business is on hand when a young puppy suddenly declares himself unable to leave a town, even if I had not seen that thy wagons already stand fully loaded, and with the oxen put to, in the courtyard?"

Of course I now stood scarlet with shame, and trembling, completely taken in my lie. But when he ordered me to come with him at once, as already too many of the precious, cool, morning hours had been lost, he encountered an opposition for which he was plainly not prepared. From a tone of command he passed to a threatening

one, and finally had recourse to pleading. He reminded me that my parents had only decided to send me on such a distant journey because they knew that I could perform it in his company and under his protection.

But he could have advanced no argument less suited to his purpose. For I at once said to myself that then I should have to wait till another embassy went to Kosambi before I could return to my Vasitthi. No, I would show my father that I was well able to conduct a caravan, alone, through all the hardships and dangers of the road.

It is true the ambassador now painted all of these dangers in sufficiently gloomy colours, but all he said was spoken to the winds. Finally, in a great rage, he left me; "he was not to blame, and I must smart for my own folly."

To me it seemed as if I were relieved from an insufferable burden; I had now surrendered myself so completely to my love. In this sweet consciousness I fell asleep, and did not wake until it was time for us to betake ourselves to the terrace where our loved ones awaited us.

Night after night we came together there, and on each occasion Vasitthi and I discovered new treasures in our mutual affection and bore away with us an increased longing for our next meeting. The moonlight seemed to me to be more silvery, the marble cooler, the scent of the double-jasmines more intoxicating, the call of the kokila more languishing, the rustling of the palms more dreamy, and the restless whispering of the asokas more full of mysterious promise, than they could possibly be elsewhere in all the world.

Oh! how distinctly I can yet recall the splendid asoka trees which stood along the whole length of the terrace and

underneath which we so often wandered, holding each other in a close embrace. "The Terrace of the Sorrowless" it was called, from those trees which the poets name the "Sorrowless Tree," and sometimes "Heartsease." I have never elsewhere seen such magnificently grown specimens. The spear-shaped sleepless leaves gleamed in the rays of the moon and whispered in the gentle night-wind, and in between them glowed the golden, orange, and scarlet flowers, although we were as yet only at the beginning of the Vasanta season. But then, O brother, how should these trees not have stood in all their glory, seeing that, as thou knowest, the asoka at once opens his blossoms if his roots be but touched by the foot of a beautiful maiden.

One wonderful night, when the moon was at its full—to me it seems as if it were but yesterday—I stood beneath them with the dear cause of their early bloom, my sweet Vasitthi. Beyond the deep shadow of the ravine, we gazed far out into the land. We saw before us the two rivers wind like silver ribbons away over the vast plain and unite at that most sacred spot, which people call the "Triple-lock," because they believe that the "Heavenly Gunga" joins them there as third—for by this beautiful name, they, in that land, call the wonderful heavenly glow which we in the South know as the Milky Way—and Vasitthi, raising her hand, pointed to where it shone far above the tree-tops.

Then we spoke of the mighty Himavat[1] in the North, whence the beloved Gunga flows down; the Himavat, whose snow-covered peaks are the habitations of the gods and whose immense forests and deep chasms have afforded shelter to the great ascetics. But with even greater pleasure did I follow to where it takes its rise, the course of the Jumna.

"Oh," I called out, "had I but a fairy bark of mother-of-

[1] Ancient name of the Himalayas.

pearl, with my wishes for sails, and steered by my will, that it might bear us on the bosom of that silver stream upward to its source. Then should Hastinapura rise again from its ruins and the towering palaces ring with the banqueting of the revellers and the strife of the dice-players. Then the sands of Kurukshetra should yield up their dead. There the hoary Bhishma in silver armour, over which hang his white locks, should tower above the field on his lofty chariot and rain his polished arrows upon the foe; the valiant Phagadatta should come dashing on, mounted on his battle-inflamed, trunk-brandishing bull elephant; the agile Krishna should sweep with the four white battle steeds of Arjuna into the fiercest tumult of the fight. Oh! how I envied the ambassador his belonging to the warrior caste, when he told me that his ancestors also had taken part in that never-to-be-forgotten encounter. But that was foolish. For not by descent only do we possess ancestors. We are our own ancestors. Where was I then? Probably even there, among the combatants. For, although I am a merchant's son, the practice of arms has always been my greatest delight; and it is not too much to say that, sword in hand, I am a match for any man."

Vasitthi embraced me rapturously and called me her hero; I must quite certainly be one of those heroes who yet live in song; which of them, we could not, of course, know, as the perfume of the coral tree would scarcely penetrate to us through the sweet aroma of the "sorrowless" trees.

I asked her to tell me something of the nature of that perfume of which, to say truth, I had never heard. Indeed I found that romance, like all things else, blossomed far more luxuriously here in the valley of the Gunga than with us among the mountains.

So she related to me how once, on his progress through

Indra's world, Krishna had, at the martial games, won the celestial coral tree and had planted it in his garden, a tree whose deep red blossoms shed their fragrance far around. And, she said, he who, by any chance, inhaled this perfume, remembered in his heart the long, long past, times long since vanished, out of his former lives.

" But only the saints are able to inhale this perfume here on earth," she said, and added almost roguishly, " and we two shall, I fear me, hardly become such. But what does that matter ? Even if we were not Nala and Damayanti, I am sure we loved each other quite as much—whatever our names may have been. And perhaps, after all, Love and Faith are the only realities, merely changing their names and forms. They are the melodies, and we, the lutes on which they are played. The lute is shattered and another is strung, but the melody remains the same. It sounds, it is true, fuller and nobler on the one instrument than on the other, just as my new vina sounds far more beautiful than my old one. We, however, are two splendid lutes for the gods to play upon,—from which to draw the sweetest of all music."

I pressed her silently to my breast, deeply moved, as well as astonished at these strange thoughts.

But she added—and smiled gently, probably guessing what was in my mind—" Oh ! I know, I really ought not to have such thoughts ; our old family Brahman became quite angry on one occasion when I hinted at something of the kind; I was to pray to Krishna and leave thinking to the Brahmans. So, as I may not think, but may surely believe, I will believe that we were, really and truly, Nala and Damayanti."

And raising her hands in prayer to the asoka before us, in all its glory of shimmering blossom and flimmering leaf, she spoke to it in the words which Damayanti, wander-

ing heart-broken in the woods, uses to the asoka; but on her lips, the flexible Çloka verses of the poet seemed to grow without effort and to blossom ever more richly, like a young shoot transplanted to hallowed soil—

"Thou Sorrowless One! the heart-rending cry of the stricken maiden hear!
Thou that so fittingly 'Heartsease' art named, give peace of thy peace to me!
Eyes of the gods are thine all-seeing blossoms; their lips, thy whispering leaves.
Tell me, oh! tell, where my heart's hero wanders, where my loved Nala waits."

Then she looked on me with love-filled eyes, in whose tears the moonlight was clearly mirrored, and spoke with lips that were drawn and quivering—

"When thou art far away, and dost recall to mind this scene of our bliss, then imagine to thyself that I stand here and speak thus to this noble tree. Only then I shall not say 'Nala,' but 'Kamanita.'"

I locked her in my arms, and our lips met in a kiss full of unutterable feeling.

Suddenly there was a rustling in the summit of the tree above us. A large, luminous red flower floated downward and settled on our tear-bedewed cheeks. Vasitthi took it in her hand, smiled, hallowed it with a kiss, and gave it to me. I hid it in my breast.

Several flowers had fallen to the ground in the avenue of trees. Medini, who sat beside Somadatta, on a bench not far from us, sprang to her feet, and, holding up several yellow asoka blossoms, came towards us, calling out—

"Look, sister! The flowers are beginning to fall already. Soon there will be enough of them for your bath."

"You don't mean those yellow things! Vasitthi may not, on any account, put them into her bath-water," ex-

claimed my mischievous friend—" that is, if her flower-like body is to blossom in harmony with her love. I assure you, only such scarlet flowers as that one which friend Kamanita has just concealed in his robe, should be used. For it is written in the golden Book of Love: 'Saffron yellow affection it is called, when it attracts attention, indeed, but, notwithstanding, later fades away; scarlet, however, when it does not later fade but becomes only too apparent.' "

At the same time he and Medini laughed in their merry, confidential way.

Vasitthi, however answered gravely, though with her sweet smile, and gently but firmly pressed my hand—

" Thou dost mistake, dear Somadatta ! My love has the colour of no flower. For I have heard it said that the colour of the truest love is not red but black—black as Çiva's throat became when the god swallowed the poison which would otherwise have destroyed all created beings. And so it must ever be. True love must be able to withstand the poison of life, and must be willing to taste the bitterest, in order that the loved one may be spared. And from that bitterest it will assuredly prefer to choose its colour, rather than from any pleasures, however dazzling."

In such wise spoke my beloved Vasitthi, that night under the sorrowless trees.

VII

IN THE RAVINE

DEEPLY moved by these vivid memories, the pilgrim became silent for a short time. Then he sighed, drew his hand over his forehead, and went on with his narrative.

In short, O brother, I went about during this whole time as if intoxicated with bliss, and my feet scarcely seemed to touch the earth. On one occasion I was obliged to laugh aloud because I heard that there were people who called this world a vale of woe, and who directed their thoughts and wishes to the not being born again among men. "What arrant fools, Somadatta," I cried, "as if there could be a more perfect abode of bliss than the Terrace of the Sorrowless!"

But beneath the terrace was the abyss.

Down into this we had just scrambled, as I called out those foolish words, and, as if I were to be shown that even the greatest of earthly pleasures has its bitterness, we were that very instant assailed by several armed men. How many there were of them, it was not possible for us, in the darkness, to distinguish. Fortunately, we were able to cover our backs by placing them against the wall of rock; and, with the calming consciousness that we were now only threatened in front, we began to fight for life and love. We bit our teeth together and were silent as the night, the while we parried and thrust as coolly as possible; but our opponents howled like devils in order to urge one another

on, and we believed we could distinguish eight to ten of them. Even if they now found a couple of better swordsmen before them than they had expected, our situation was yet sufficiently grave. Two of them, however, soon measured their length on the ground, and their bodies hindered the fighting of the others, who feared to stumble over them and so be delivered up to the tender mercies of our sword-points. Then they withdrew, as we imagined, a few steps: we certainly no longer felt their hot breath in our faces.

I whispered a few words to Somadatta, and we moved a couple of paces sideward, in the hope that our assailants, imagining us in the old spot, would make a sudden leap forward, and, in so doing, would run against the wall of rock, and break the points of their swords, while ours should find an energetic lodgment between their ribs. Although we observed the greatest caution, however, some faint sound must have awakened their suspicion. For the blind attack we hoped for did not ensue; but presently I saw a narrow streak of light strike the wall, and also became aware that this ray was emitted from a lamp-wick, evidently fixed in a carefully opened holder, beside which a warty nose and a cunning half-closed eye were to be seen.

As the bamboo pole by the help of which we had scaled the terrace front was still in my left hand, I made a manful thrust with it. There was a loud shriek, and the disappearance of the ray, no less than the clirr of the small lamp as it fell to the earth, bore witness to the efficacy of my stroke; and this brief respite we made use of to get away as rapidly as possible in the direction whence we had come. We knew that here the gorge became gradually narrower and the ascent somewhat steep, and that, finally, one could scramble up to the top without any special exertion. But it was nevertheless a

piece of great good fortune that our would-be murderers very soon gave up the pursuit in the darkness; for, at the final ascent, my strength threatened to give way, and I felt that I was bleeding copiously from several wounds. My friend was also wounded, though less severely.

On the level once more, we cut up my robe and temporarily bound up our wounds, and then, leaning on Somadatta's arm, I fortunately succeeded in reaching home, where I was obliged to pass several weeks on a bed of pain.

There I now lay, tortured by threefold trouble. My wounds and the fever together consumed my body, and a burning longing for my beloved devoured my soul. But to these was soon added apprehension for her precious life. For the delicate, flower-like being had not been able to endure the news of the mortal danger in which I had been, and perhaps even yet was, and had fallen victim to a severe illness. Her faithful foster-sister Medini, however, went daily from one sick-bed to the other, and we did not lack at least for constant communication and stimulating intercourse. Flowers passed to and fro between us, and, as we were both initiated into the mystery of the language of flowers, we confided many things to one another by the help of these sweet messengers. Later, as our strength came back, many a dainty verse found its way from hand to hand, and our condition would soon have become really quite endurable if, with our recovery,—which kept even pace in her case and in mine, just as though we were too truly united to admit of any precedence whatever between us,—the future had not also approached and filled us with grave care.

I may say here, that the nature of the, to all appearance, enigmatic and sudden attack had not remained a mystery to us. No other than the son of the Minister of State,—Satagira was his hated name,—with whom I had striven on

that unforgettable afternoon in the park for Vasitthi's ball—no other than he had set the hired murderers upon me. Beyond a doubt he had noticed that I remained behind in the town, after the departure of the embassy, and his suspicions having been thereby awakened, he had very soon spied out my nightly visits to the terrace.

Ah! that Terrace of the Sorrowless was, to our love, like a sunken island now. True, I would have joyfully flung my life into the breach, over and over again, to be able to embrace my sweet darling. But even if Vasitthi had had the heart to expose me every night to deadly danger, any such temptation was spared us. Satagira, in his baseness, must have informed the parents of my sweetheart of our secret meetings, for it was soon apparent that Vasitthi was carefully and jealously watched; besides which, staying out on the terrace after sundown was forbidden to her—ostensibly on account of the danger to her health.

Thus, then, was our love homeless. That which, most of all, feels itself at home in secret, might only be so now where the whole world looked on. In that public garden where I first beheld her divine form, and had sought for her several times in vain, we met once or twice, as if by chance. But what a meeting was that! How fleeting the stolen minutes! how hesitating and few the hasty words! how forced the movements which felt themselves exposed to curious or even spying glances! Vasitthi besought me at once to leave the town in which I was threatened with deadly danger because of her neighbourhood. She reproached herself bitterly for having by her obstinacy, on that first evening on the terrace, prevailed upon me to stay, and thereby all but driven me into the jaws of death already. Perhaps even at this very moment in which she

was speaking, a fresh band of assassins was being hired against me. If I did not depart at once, and so place myself beyond the reach of this peril, I should make her the murderess of her best beloved. Suppressed sobs choked her utterance, and I was obliged to stand there without being able to enfold her in my arms, or kiss away the tears which rolled, heavy as the first drops of a thunder-shower, down over her pallid checks. Such a farewell I could not suffer, and I told her it was not possible to leave without first meeting her alone, in what way soever this might have to be accomplished.

Vasitthi's despairing and beseeching look, as, just at that moment, we were obliged, owing to the approach of several people, to part, could not shake my determination. I trusted to the invention of my beloved, who now, spurred on by longing for me and fear for my life, counselled more-over by her clever and—in all love matters—experienced foster-sister Medini, would be certain to find some way out of the difficulty. And I was not deceived; for that very night Somadatta was able to tell me of a most promising plan of hers.

VIII

THE PARADISE BUD

A LITTLE behind the eastern wall of Kosambi lies a beautiful sinsapa wood which is, strictly speaking, a sacred grove. In an open glade the sanctuary yet stands, though in a sadly dilapidated condition. It is long since any sacrificial service has taken place in this ancient fane, because Krishna, to whom it is dedicated, has had a magnificent and much larger temple built to him in the town itself. In the ruin, however, dwelt, besides a pair of owls, a holy woman, who enjoyed the reputation of having relations with spirits, by whose help she was able to look into the future—insight which the good soul did not withhold from such of her fellow-creatures as brought votive offerings. Such persons made pilgrimages to her in large numbers, among them, and particularly after sunset, being young folks of both sexes, who were, or fancied themselves, in love, and there were not lacking malicious tongues which asserted that the old woman should rather be called a female pander than a saint. However that may have been, *this* saintliness was just what we needed, and her little temple was chosen as the place for our meeting.

Next day I started with my ox-wagons, and took care that it should be at the hour when people were on their way to the bazaar or to the law-courts. In doing so, I intentionally chose the most frequented streets, so that my

departure could not possibly remain hidden from my enemy Satagira. After but a few hours' travel, however, I halted in a large village and had my caravan go into night quarters there, to the no small delight of my people. Shortly before sunset, I myself mounted a fresh horse, and, wrapped in the coarse mantle of one of my servants, rode back to Kosambi, over the road we had just come.

Night had fallen, and it was quite dark by the time I reached the sinsapa wood. As I carefully guided my horse between the tree-trunks, I was welcomed by the splendid odour of the blossoms of the night-lotus, which rose to greet me from the ancient Krishna pond. Very soon the crumbling roof of the temple, with its swarming images of the gods, and its jagged and tangled outlines, began to show against the starlit heavens. I was at the appointed place. Scarcely had I swung myself out of the saddle when my friends were at my side. With a cry of rapture, Vasitthi and I rushed into one another's arms, half beside ourselves with the joy of meeting again, and all my recollections now are of caresses, stammered words of endearment, and assurances of love and fidelity, which absorbed us utterly, till I was rudely startled by the unexpected feeling of a wing that softly fanned my cheek as it brushed lightly past. This, with the hoot of an owl, and the hateful clang of a cracked bronze bell which immediately followed, had the effect of completely rousing me from my love-trance. Medini had pulled the old prayer-bell, and so scared the owl from the recess in which she dwelt. The good-hearted girl had done it, not so much to summon the saintly woman, as because she saw that formidable person already coming out of the sanctuary, plainly indignant that she should hear voices within the sacred precincts, although no one had either rung or knocked.

Medini informed the ancient dame that her great reputation for holiness, and the report of her marvellous knowledge, had brought herself and this young man—pointing to Somadatta—to seek her, in order to receive information about what was yet concealed in the lap of time. The holy woman raised her glance searchingly towards heaven, and gave it as her opinion that, as the Pleiades occupied a particularly favourable position with regard to the Polar Star, she had good reason to hope that the spirits would not refuse their help; upon which she invited Somadatta and Medini to enter the House of Krishna, the Sixteen-thousand-one-hundredfold Bridegroom,[1] who delighted in granting to a pair of lovers the inmost wishes of their hearts. Vasitthi and I, however, as the supposed attendants, remained outside.

How we now assured one another, with the most solemn oaths, that only the All-destroyer, Death, should be able to part us, how we spoke of my speedy return so soon as the rainy season should be over, and discussed ways and means by which her extremely rich parents should be brought to consent to our union, and how all this was intermingled with innumerable kisses, tears, and embraces, I could not now tell thee with even an attempt at truth, for it abides with me only as the remembrance of a vague dream. Still less, however, can I, if thou thyself hast not lived through a similar experience, give thee any idea of the way in which, in every embrace, sweetest rapture and heart-rending despair clasped each other round; for each embrace reminded us that the last for this time would soon come, and who could give us the assurance that it would not then be the very last for all time?

[1] The legend attached to this strange name is told in the chapter entitled "Buddha and Khrishna."

All too soon, Somadatta and Medini came forth from the temple. The saintly woman wished to reveal the future to us also now, but Vasitthi shrank from the thought.

"How should I bear it," she exclaimed, "if a future menacing disaster were to be unveiled?"

"But why then just menacing disaster?" said the well-meaning old woman, whose life experiences, presumably as the result of her sanctity, had probably been happy ones. "For the servant also, happiness waits," she added, with a look fraught with promise.

But Vasitthi was not to be allured; sobbing, she clung around my neck.

"Ah! my only love!" she cried, "I feel as though the future with inexorable face were looking down upon us. Oh! I feel it—I shall never see thee more."

Although these words caused an icy chill to creep over me, I tried to reason her out of this groundless fear; but, just because it was groundless, my most eloquent words availed little or nothing. The tears rolled in an unbroken stream over her cheeks; with a look of divine love, she caught my hand and pressed it to her breast.

"Yet if we should nevermore see each other in this world, we shall still remain faithful; and when this short and painful life on earth is ended, we shall find one another in Paradise, and, united there, for ever enjoy the raptures of heaven. . . . O Kamanita, promise me that. How much more will that upraise and strengthen me than any words of comfort! For these are as powerless against the inevitable stream of Fate, already surging towards us, as the reeds against the floods of waters. But all-powerful, bringing forth new life, is sacred, deep-seated resolution."

"If it depends only upon that, beloved Vasitthi, how

should I fail to find thee anywhere?" I said. "But let us hope that it will be in this world."

"Here everything is uncertain, and even the moment in which we now speak is not ours, but it will be otherwise in Paradise."

"Ah! Vasitthi," I sighed, "is there a Paradise—and where does it lie?"

"Where the sun sets," she replied, with complete conviction, "lies the Paradise of Infinite Light; and for all who have the courage to despise the earthly, and to fix their thoughts upon that place of bliss, there waits a pure birth from the bosom of a lotus flower. The first craving for that Paradise causes a bud to appear in the holy waters of the crystal seas; every pure thought, every good deed, causes it to grow and develop; while all evil committed in thought, word, and deed gnaws like a worm within it, and brings it near to withering away."

Her eyes shone like temple lights as she spoke thus in a voice which sounded like sweetest music. Then she raised her hand and pointed over the dark tops of the sinsapa trees to where the Milky Way, with a soft radiance upon it as of glowing alabaster, lay along the dark purple star-sown field of heaven.

"Look there, Kamanita," she cried, "the heavenly Gunga! Let us swear by its silver waters—which feed the lotus seas of yonder fields of the blest—to fix our whole souls upon the preparing of an eternal home there for our love."

Strangely moved, completely carried out of myself, and agitated to the very depths of my being, I raised my hand to hers, and our hearts thrilled as one at the divine thought that, at that instant, in endless immensities of space, high above the storm of this earthly existence, a

double bud of the life of eternal love had come into being.

As though with the effort her strength was exhausted, Vasitthi sank into my arms, where, after having pressed yet another lingering farewell kiss upon my lips, she lay to all appearance lifeless.

I put her softly into Medini's arms, mounted my horse, and rode away without once venturing to look round.

IX

UNDER THE CONSTELLATION OF THE ROBBERS

WHEN I again reached the village in which my followers had taken up their quarters for the night, I did not hesitate to wake them; and, at least a couple of hours before sunrise, the caravan was on its way.

On the twelfth day, about the hour of noon, we reached a very charming valley in the wooded region of the Vedisas. A small river, clear as crystal, wound slowly through the green meadows; the gentle slopes were timbered with blossoming underwood which spread an aromatic odour all around; somewhere about the middle of the extended valley bottom, and not far from the little river, there stood a nyagrodha tree, whose impenetrable leafy dome cast a black shadow on the emerald mead beneath, and which, supported by its thousand secondary trunks, formed a grove, wherein ten caravans like mine could easily have found shelter.

I remembered the spot perfectly from our journey out, and had already decided on it as a camping-place. So a halt was made. The tired oxen waded out into the stream and drank greedily of the cooling waters, the better, by and by, to enjoy the tender grass on the banks. The men refreshed themselves with a bath, and, collecting some withered branches, proceeded to light a fire at which to cook their rice; whilst I—also reanimated by a bath—flung myself down at full length where the shadows lay

deepest, with a root of the chief trunk as head-rest, in order to think of Vasitthi, and soon, in very truth, to dream of her. Led by the hand of my beloved, I floated away through the fields of Paradise.

A great outcry brought me abruptly back to rude reality. As though a wicked magician had suffered them to grow up out of the soil, armed men swarmed about us, and the neighbouring thickets added constantly to their numbers. They were already at the wagons, which I had ordered to be drawn up in a circle round the tree, and had begun to fight with my people, who were practised in the handling of arms, and defended themselves bravely. I was soon in the thick of the fight. Several robbers fell by my hand. Suddenly, I saw before me a tall, bearded man of horrible aspect, the upper part of his body naked, and about his neck a triple row of human thumbs. Like a flash, the knowledge came to me: "This is Angulimala, the cruel, bloodthirsty robber, who makes of the villages blackened roof-trees; of the towns, heaps of smoking ruins; of the wide lands, desert wastes; who does away with innocent people and hangs their thumbs about his neck." And I believed my last hour was come. As a matter of fact, the monster at once struck my sword out of my hand—a feat with which I would have credited no being of flesh and blood. Soon I lay on the ground, fettered hand and foot. Round about me all my people were killed save one, an old servant of my father's, who was overpowered by numbers, and, like myself, had been made prisoner without a wound. Gathered in groups round about us, under the shady roof of the gigantic tree, the robbers indulged themselves to their hearts' content. The crystal chain with the tiger's eye, which, as I have already mentioned to thee, was torn apart in the struggle

with Satagira—the chain which my good mother had at parting hung round my neck as an amulet—was rent from me by Angulimala's murderous hand. But much more distressing was the loss of the asoka flower, which I had constantly carried over my heart since that night on the terrace. Not far from me, I believed I could see it, a little red flame in the trampled grass, on the very spot where the youngest robbers ran hither and thither, carrying to the revellers the streaming flesh of beeves which had been hastily slaughtered and roasted, and, what was even more agreeable to the thirsty passions of that bestial throng, calabashes filled with spirits. It was to me as though they trampled on my heart every time I saw my poor asoka flower disappear under their foul feet, to reappear a moment later less luminous than before, till at length I could see it no longer. And I wondered whether Vasitthi now stood beneath the sorrowless tree, pleading for news. How good, if she were, that it could not tell her where I then was, for she would certainly have yielded up her tender soul could she have seen me in such surroundings. Not more than a dozen paces away, the formidable Angulimala himself caroused with several of his cronies. The bottle coursed freely, and the faces of the robbers—with the exception of *one*, of whom I will speak later—became more and more flushed, while they carried on conversations full of noisy animation and excitement, and now and again broke into open quarrel.

At that time, unfortunately, the jargon of the robbers had not been added to my many accomplishments—from which one may see how little human beings can discern what acquirements are likely to be of most service to them. How more than glad I should have been to be able to comprehend the gist of their loud talk, for I could not doubt that it concerned me and my fate! Their faces

and gestures showed me so much, with gruesome plainness; and veritable tongues of flame, which from time to time flashed over to me from beneath the thick, bushy brows of the robber captain, brought home with much bitterness the loss of my amulet against the evil eye, which I could now see gleaming on the shaggy breast of the monster himself. My feeling was not at fault, for, as I later learned, I had cut down a pet of Angulimala's—one who was, moreover, the best swordsman in the whole band—before his very eyes, and the captain had only refrained from killing me on the spot, for the reason that he wanted to still his thirst for vengeance, by seeing me slowly tortured to death. But the others were not inclined to see a rich prize, which belonged of right to the whole band, uselessly squandered in any such way. A bald-headed, smooth-shaven robber, who looked as though he might be a priest, struck me as the man who chiefly differed from Angulimala, and the only one who understood how to curb the savage. He was also the only one whose face during the drinking retained its paleness. After a long dispute, in the course of which Angulimala sprang up a couple of times and reached for his sword, victory fell—fortunately for me—to the professional aspect of the case.

It should be mentioned that Angulimala's band belonged to the "Senders," so called because it was one of their rules that, of two prisoners, one should be sent to raise the money required for the ransom they demanded. If they took a father and son prisoner, they bade the father go and bring the ransom for the son; of two brothers, they sent the elder; if a teacher with his disciple had fallen into their hands, then the disciple was sent; had a master and his servant been caught, then the servant was obliged to go—for which reason they were known as the "Senders."

To this end they had, as was usual with them, spared my father's old servant when they butchered all the rest of my people; for, although somewhat up in years, he was still very active, and looked intelligent and experienced—which indeed he had proved himself to be, seeing that he had already successfully conducted several caravans.

He was now freed from his fetters and sent away that same evening, after I had given him a confidential message to my parents, from which they would be able to see that there was no deception about the matter. But before he set out, Angulimala scratched some marks on a palm-leaf and handed it to him. It was a kind of safe-conduct, in case, on the way back with the money, he should fall into the hands of other robbers. For Angulimala's name was so feared, that robbers who dared to steal royal presents from the king's highway would never have had the audacity even to touch anything that was his.

My chains were also soon taken off, as they well knew that I would not be so foolish as attempt to fly. The first use to which I put my freedom was to fling myself down on the spot where I had seen the asoka flower disappear. But alas! not even a remnant of it could I discover. The delicate bit of flaming flower seemed under the coarse feet of the robbers to have been stamped to very dust. Was it a symbol of our life-happiness?

Comparatively free, I now lived with and moved about among those dangerous fellows, awaiting the arrival of the ransom which must come within two months.

As we were at that time in the dark half of the month, thefts and robberies followed upon one another in rapid succession. For this season, which stands under the auspices of the terrible goddess Kali, was devoted almost exclusively to regular business, so that no night passed

without a surprise attack being carried out, or a house broken into. Several times whole villages were plundered. On the fifteenth night of the waning moon, Kali's festival was celebrated with ghastly solemnity. Not only were bulls and countless black goats slaughtered before her image, but several unhappy prisoners as well; the victim being placed before the altar, and having an artery so opened that the blood spouted directly into the mouth of the loathsome figure hung round with its necklaces and pendants of human skulls. Thereafter followed a frantic orgy, in the course of which the robbers swilled intoxicating drink with utter abandon till quite senseless, all the while amusing themselves with the Bajaderes who had been, with unparalleled audacity, carried off for that purpose from a great temple.

Angulimala, who in his cups became magnanimous, wanted to make me also happy with a young and handsome Bajadere. But when I, with my heart full of Vasitthi, spurned the maiden, and she, overwhelmed by the slight put upon her, burst into tears, Angulimala flew into a frightful rage, seized, and would have strangled me then and there, but that the bald, smooth-faced robber came to my help. A few words from him sufficed to make the iron grip of the chief relax, and to send him away growling like a scarcely tamed brute.

This remarkable man, who thus for the second time became my rescuer,—his hands yet bloody from the hideous Kali sacrifice he had conducted,—was the son of a Brahman. But because he had been born under the Robber Constellation he had taken to the trade of the robber. At first he had belonged to the "Thugs," but went over for scientific reasons to the "Senders." From his father's family he had inherited, as he told me, a leaning to religious meditation.

So, on the one hand, he conducted the sacrificial service as priest,—and people ascribed the unusual luck of the band nearly as much to his priestly knowledge as to Angulimala's able leadership,—and, on the other hand, he lectured on the metaphysics of the robber-nature, in systematic form,—and not only on the technical side of it, but on its ethical side also; for I observed, to my amazement, that the robbers did have a morality of their own, and by no means considered themselves worse than other men.

These lectures were delivered chiefly at night, during the clear half of the month, at which time—apart from chance occurrences—business was quiet. In a forest clearing, the hearers squatted in several semicircular rows about the worshipful Vajaçravas, who sat with his legs crossed under him. His powerful head, barren of all hair, shone in the moonlight, and his whole appearance was not unlike that of a Vedic teacher who, in the quiet of a starlit night, imparts the Esoteric or Secret Doctrine to the inmates of a forest hermitage; but, on the other hand, many an unholy and bestial face, aye, and that of many a gallows-bird, was to be seen in that circle. It really seems to me as though I see them at this moment—as though I hear again the seething of the sounds in that gigantic forest, now swelling to the long sough of the far-off storm, anon sinking to the gentle sigh of the night wind as it goes to rest amid the lonely tree-tops—at intervals, the distant growl of a tiger or the hoarser bellow of a panther—and above it all, clear, penetrating, marvellously quiet, the voice of Vajaçravas—a deep, full-toned bass, the priceless inheritance of countless generations of Udgatars.[1]

To these lectures I was admitted because Vajaçravas had conceived a liking for me. He even went so far as to

[1] Vedic sacrificial singers.

assert that I, like himself, had been born under a robber star, and that I would one day join myself to the servants of Kali, for which reason it would be of value to listen to his addresses, as they would unquestionably waken to active life the instincts slumbering within me. I have on such occasions heard very remarkable lectures from him on the different "Sects of Kali"—usually called thieves and robbers—and on the usages which severally distinguish them. No less instructive than entertaining were his excursive remarks on themes like "The value of courtesans in hoodwinking the police," or "Characteristics of officials of the upper and lower ranks, open to bribery, with reliable notes as to each man's price." To his particularly keen observation of mankind, as well as to his severe logicality in drawing conclusions, irreproachable testimony was borne by his treatment of the question, "How and why do rascals recognise one another at the first glance, while honest men do not; and what advantages accrue to the former from this circumstance?" not to speak of his brilliant remarks on "The stupidity of night-watchmen in general, a stimulating reflection for beginners," when the sleeping forest rang again to such a chorus of laughter that the robbers flocked together from all sides of the camp, in order to hear what was going on.

But dry technical questions also, the master understood how to handle in an interesting fashion, and I recollect really fascinating dissertations on "How to make a breach in a wall without noise," or, "How to excavate a subterranean passage with technical accuracy." The proper construction of different kinds of crowbars, particularly of the so-called "snake-jaw," and of the "cancriform" hook, was most graphically described; the use of soft-stringed instruments to discover whether people are awake,

and of the wooden head of a man thrust in at the door or window to ascertain whether the supposed burglar will be observed,—all such things were thoroughly discussed. His development of the theory that a man, when carrying out a theft, must unquestionably take the life of every one who might later bear witness against him, as also his general consideration of the statement that a thief should not be afflicted with a moral walk and conversation, but, on the contrary, be coarse and violent, occasionally abandoning himself to drunkenness and immorality, I count among the most learned and witty lectures I have ever heard.

In order, however, to give thee a better idea of the profound mind of this truly original man, I must repeat to thee the most famous passage from his "Commentary on the Ancient Kali-Sutras, the Esoteric Doctrine of the Thieves"[1]—a commentary of all but canonical importance.

[1] With regard to the style of the Indian Sutras and their connection with the next chapter, see the note at the end of this book.

X

ESOTERIC DOCTRINE

THUS the Sutra reads: "THE DIVINE ALSO DOST THOU THINK? . . . NO! . . . IRRESPONSIBILITY . . . ON ACCOUNT OF SPACE, OF SCRIPTURE, OF TRADITION."

The worshipful Vajaçravas comments upon this as follows: "'*The divine also* . . .' that is punishment.

"For, in the preceding Sutra, such punishments were spoken of as the king or the authorities decree upon the robber, of which are: the mutilation of hand, foot, and nose, the seething cauldron, the pitch garland, the dragon's mouth, running the gauntlet, the rack, besprinkling with boiling oil, decapitation, rending by dogs, impalement of the living body—more than sufficient reason why the robber should, if possible, not let himself be caught, but, if he should indeed have been caught, why he should in every possible way seek to escape.

"Now some people say, 'Divine punishment also threatens the robber.' 'No,' says our Sutra; and for the reason that *irresponsibility* comes into play. Which may be made clear in three ways: by the aid of reason, from the Veda, and from the heroic songs handed down to us.

"'*On account of space* . . .' by which the following consideration, founded on reason, is meant. If I cut off the head of a human being or an animal, my sword goes through between the indivisible particles; for these particles it cannot, on account of that very indivisibility, cut through.

What it cuts through, then, is the empty space which separates these particles. But to this space one cannot, on account of its very emptiness, do any harm. For to harm a nothing is just the same as not to harm anything. As a consequence, one cannot by this cutting through of space incur any responsibility, and a divine punishment cannot be meted out for it. But if this be true of killing, how much more then of deeds which are punished less severely by men?

"Thus far, reason; now comes *scripture.*

"The sacred Veda teaches us that that which alone has any true existence, is the highest godhead, the Brahman. But if this be true, then all killing is an empty deception. This the Veda also says in so many words, in the passage where Yama, the god of death, tells the young Naçiketas of this Brahman, and among other things, says—

> "'Who, slaying, believes that he kills,
> Who, when slain, believes that he dies,
> Astray is this one and that—
> He dies not, nor does he kill.'

"But even more convincingly is this abysmal truth revealed to us in *The Heroic Song of Krishna and Arjuna.* For Krishna himself, having known no beginning, destined to know no end, the eternal, almighty, unthinkable being, the highest god, who for the salvation of all created beings suffered himself to be born as man—Krishna helped, in the last days of his earthly pilgrimage, the King of the Pándavas, the high-minded Arjuna, in the war against the Kauravas, because the latter had done him and his brothers grievous wrong. Now when both armies were drawn up in battle array, their bristling ranks opposed to one another, Arjuna espied among the hostile forces many a former friend, many a cousin and comrade of past days.

For the Pándavas and the Kauravas were the sons of two brothers. And Arjuna was moved to the depths of his heart, and he hesitated to give the signal for battle, for loath was he to kill those who had once been his own people. So he stood there looking down from his war-chariot, his chin sunk on his breast, a prey to torturing hesitancy, undecided as to what he should do ; and beside him stood the golden god Krishna, who was his charioteer. And Krishna guessed at the thoughts of the noble Pandaver king.

"Smiling, he pointed to the rival armies, and showed Arjuna how all those beings come into existence and pass —yet only in seeming—because in all of them only that *One* lives whose past has known no dawn, whose future shall know no sunset, untouched alike by birth and death—

> "'Who for a murd'rer holds the one,
> Who deems him murdered that lies here,
> He knows, and knows of either, naught—
> For no one murders, no one dies,
> Come then, the fight beginnest thou!'

"Taught in this way, the Pandaver king gave the signal for beginning the awful battle, and won. So that Krishna, the human-born, highest god, by the revelation of this great esoteric doctrine, changed Arjuna from a shallow and weak-hearted man to a deeply thoughtful, iron-hearted sage and hero.

"In truth, then, the following holds good:

"'Whosoever commits a crime or causes it to be committed, whosoever destroys or causes to be destroyed, whosoever strikes or causes to be struck, whosoever robs the living of life or takes that which has not been given to him, breaks into houses, or robs others of their property—

whatsoever it be that he does, he burdens himself with no guilt; and whosoever should, now and here, convert with a sharply ground axe every living thing on this earth to a single boneless mass, to one mass of pulp, would, on that account, be no way guilty, do no wrong. And whoso should on the southern bank of the Gunga take his way, laying waste and murdering, would, on that account, have no guilt; and whoso should on the northern bank of the Gunga take his way, distributing alms and making presents, would, on that account, have no merit. By means of generosity, gentleness, self-renunciation, one does nothing meritorious, nothing good.'"

And there now follows the astounding, yea, frightful

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which, in its striking brevity, runs—

"RATHER . . . ON ACCOUNT OF THE EATER . . ."

The meaning of these few words, wrapped as they are in deepest mystery, the worshipful Vajaçravas discloses to us as follows:

"Far removed from any such idea as that of divine punishment threatening the robber and homicide, 'rather' is the opposite the case; namely, that he grows like to God himself, which becomes clear from those passages in the Veda, where the highest God is glorified as the "Eater," such as—

> "The Warrior and the Brahman both, He eats for bread,
> When he with brew of death them sprinkles o'er."

"As the world has its beginning in Brahman, so also its passing away; Brahman causing it ever to go forth anew and ever destroying it. So that God is not only the creator but also the devourer of all created beings, of whom here only 'Warriors' and 'Brahmans' are mentioned as the highest in rank—and who therefore represent all the others.

"So also it reads in another passage—

"'I eat them all, but me they do not eat.'

These were the very words, as thou must know, of the Highest God himself when, in the shape of a ram, he carried the boy Medhatithi to the heavenly world. For, indignant at his forcible abduction, the latter demanded to know who his abductor was: 'Tell me who thou art, else will I, a Brahman, smite thee with my wrath.' And he, in the semblance of a ram, revealed himself as that highest Brahman, as the All in All, in the words—

"'Who is't that kills and also prisoner takes?
Who is the ram that leads thee far from here?
Lo! it is I, who in this form appear,
Lo! it is I, and I appear in every form.

'If one feels fear, be it of whatsoe'er,
Lo! fear is mine, who also cause to fear;
But in the greatness, lies the difference—
I eat them all, but me they do not eat.

'Who might me know? who call me by my name?
I smote my enemies all, me no one smote.'

"It must by this time be plain to the dimmest eye that the likeness to the Brahman canot lie in being destroyed and eaten—as would be the case were gentleness and self-renunciation to be regarded as virtues—but, on the contrary, in destroying and eating all others. In other words, it lies in using others to the utmost and in crushing them —while in one's own person suffering no harm.

"There cannot therefore be the slightest doubt but that the doctrine—of the punishment of hell for him who commits deeds of violence—is an invention of the weak to protect themselves from the might of the strong, by intimidating them.

"And if, in the Veda, several passages contain this doctrine, they must—because quite out of harmony with the chief tenets of the faith—have been at some time treacherously interpolated by the weak. When, then, the Rigveda says that, although the whole world is, properly speaking, the Brahman, yet God recognises mankind to be, of all others, the most fully penetrated by the Brahman—it cannot but be recognised that, among men, the real and true robber is the man, of all others and beyond all others, who is most fully penetrated by the Brahman, and that he therefore is the Head of Creation.

"But with regard to the thief who does not rise to the level of robberhood, seeing that scripture frequently declares the idea of 'that belongs to me' to be a delusion and a hindrance to the highest purpose for which men were created, it is, without further waste of words, clear that the thief, who has made it his life-work to combat that delusion by his daily actions, represents the highest truth. Nevertheless the robber, on account of his violence, stands higher.

"So then, the position of the robber as 'Lord of Creation' has been made plainly manifest, both by logical reasoning and from scripture, and is to be regarded as incontrovertible."

XI

THE ELEPHANT'S TRUNK

After the foregoing specimen of the curious sentiments of this extraordinary man—to whose charge at least one cannot lay, as to that of so many other noted thinkers, that he didn't put his theories into practice—I resume the thread of my narrative.

In the presence of these manifold adventures and new mental occupations—I naturally didn't neglect the opportunity either of making the robbers' jargon my own—it was impossible that the time should not pass quickly. But the nearer it approached its end, the more was my confidence shaken by oppressive fears. Would the ransom come at all? Although the safe-conduct given him could protect the old servant against robbers, yet a tiger might have rent him in pieces at some point on his journey, or a swollen river swept him away, or any one of the countless unforeseen chances of travel might have detained him until too late. Angulimala's flaming glances shot so often and so evilly over to me that I felt as if he were hoping for something of the kind, and then perspiration born of sheer fear broke forth from every pore. However wonderfully and systematically introduced, and with whatever keenest logic established, Vajaçravas' reasoned statement might be, that in every case in which the ransom was not forthcoming within the proper time, the prisoner in question had to be sawn through the

middle with a cross-cut saw, and both parts tossed on to the high-road with the head towards the rising moon, yet I must honestly confess that my admiration for this, scientifically regarded, assuredly astounding performance of my learned friend was somewhat spoiled by a peculiar sensation in my more than slightly interested peritoneum, particularly as the double-toothed cross-cut saw used on such occasions was fetched, and, to illustrate what he said, was set in motion by two horrible-looking fellows, its victim for the moment being a faggot representing a human being.

Vajaçravas, who noticed that I began to feel sick, patted me encouragingly on the shoulder, and said that the thing did not in any way concern me. From which I naturally began to hope that, in case of necessity, he would come to my rescue for the third time. But when I, in most grateful words, hinted at something of the kind, he drew a very long face and said—

"If thy Karma should really bear thee such a grudge as to suffer thy ransom to come late, were it but by so much as half a day, then assuredly no god and no devil could help thee, for the laws of Kali are *inviolable*. But comfort thyself, my son. Thou art designed for quite other things. Rather do I fear for thee that thou wilt one day, after a notable robber career, be beheaded or impaled in some public place. But that is a long way off yet."

I could not say that this comfort uplifted me greatly, and so was not a little relieved when, a full week before the expiry of the allotted time, our faithful old servant arrived with the sum demanded. I bade farewell to my horrible host—who, remembering his slain friend, put on a gloomy expression, as though he would much rather have had me sawn asunder—and affectionately pressed the

hand of the Brahman, who banished a tear of emotion by the confident assurance that we should certainly meet again on the nightly paths of Kali. Then we left accompanied by four robbers, who had to answer with their lives for our safe arrival in Ujjeni. For Angulimala, who was very jealous of his robber honour, promised them, as he sent us away, that if I were not handed over, safe and sound, in my native town, he would flay them alive and hang their skins up at the four corners of a cross-road; and men knew that he kept his word.

Fortunately, however, it did not, in this instance, become necessary, and the four rogues, who behaved admirably on the way, may still be in the service of the goddess-dancer with her swaying necklace of skulls.

We reached Ujjeni without further adventure; and, to be quite truthful, I had had enough with what I had already gone through. The joy of my parents at seeing me was indescribable. But all the more was it impossible to wring from them the permission to undertake a journey to Kosambi very soon again. My father had lost, as thou knowest, in addition to my by no means insignificant ransom, all the goods and all the people in my caravan, and was not in a position at once to fit out a new one. Yet that was a small hindrance in comparison with the terror which overcame my parents at the thought of the dangers of the road. In addition, we did not fail to hear from time to time of Angulimala's fearful deeds; and I cannot deny that I had no great desire to fall into his hands a second time. Nor was there just then the slightest possibility of getting a message through to Kosambi, so that I was obliged to content myself with memories, and, confidently relying upon the fidelity of my adored Vasitthi, to comfort myself with the hope of better times.

And at last these came. One day a rumour flew like wild-fire through the town, that the frightful Angulimala had been utterly defeated by Satagira, the son of the Minister in Kosambi, his band cut down or dispersed, and he himself with many of his most notorious followers taken prisoner and executed.

My parents were now no longer able to resist my passionate entreaties. People had really good reason at last to believe that, for a long time to come, the roads would be free; and my father was not disinclined to try his luck again. But at this juncture I became ill, and when I rose from my bed the rainy season was so near, that it was necessary to wait till it should be past. Then, indeed, nothing further stood in my way. With many admonitions to be prudent, my parents bade me farewell, and I was once more on the road, at the head of a well-stocked caravan of thirty ox-wagons, with a heart full of joy and courage, and urged forward by consuming desire.

Everything ran as smoothly on the present journey as on my first one, and one beautiful morning I entered Kosambi, half-crazed with joy. I was soon aware, however, of a most unusual throng of people in the streets, and my progress became ever slower, till at length, at a spot where we had to cross the chief thoroughfare in the town, our train of wagons came to a complete standstill. It was literally impossible to force our way through the crowd, and I now noticed that the chief street, of which I have spoken, was most magnificently decorated with flagstaffs, carpets depending from the windows and balconies, and festoons hung from side to side of the street, as for some pageant. Cursing with impatience, I asked those who stood in front of me what was taking place.

"Why," they cried out, "dost thou not know then that

this day Satagira, the son of the Minister of State, celebrates his marriage? Thou canst consider thyself most fortunate to have arrived just at this moment, for the procession is now on its way from the temple of Krishna, and passes here; and such magnificence thou hast assuredly never beheld!"

That Satagira should be celebrating his marriage was to me no less important than welcome news, because his seeking the hand of my Vasitthi in marriage would have been, with her parents, one of the greatest hindrances to our union. So the waiting did not displease me, and the less that it could not last long, for already we were able to see the lances of a cavalry division which moved slowly past amid the deafening plaudits of the crowd. These horsemen enjoyed, as the people told me, the greatest popularity in Kosambi, because it was chiefly they who had rendered Angulimala's band innocuous.

Almost directly behind them came the elephant carrying the bride—beyond all question a stupendous sight—the crusted, knoll-like forehead of the gigantic animal—which reminded one of Meru, the mountain of the gods—covered with a veil of many-coloured jewels. And just as, in the early year, a fiery bull elephant moves along, the drops of moisture rolling down his temples and cheeks, and swarms of bees, allured by the sweet odour, hang over it, so here, temples and cheeks shimmered with the most wonderful pearls, above which dangled limpid garlands of black diamonds—an effect beautiful enough to make one cry out. The powerful tusks were mounted in the purest gold; and from the breastplate, which was made of the same precious metal and set with large rubies, the airiest of Benares muslin hung down and softly wound

itself around the powerful legs of the animal, like morning mists around the stems of lordly forest trees.

But it was the trunk of the state elephant that, before all things else, enchained my glance. Processions I had seen in Ujjeni, and gorgeously decorated elephants' trunks, but never one displaying such taste as this. With us, the trunk was usually divided into fields which formed one exquisite pattern and were completely covered with colour. But here the skin was left free as the ground-tone, and over this branch-like foundation was twined a loose spray of lancet-shaped asoka leaves, from the midst of which yellow, orange, and scarlet flowers shone forth—the whole, in treatment and finish, the perfection of exquisite ornamental stylisation.

While I now, with the eye of a connoisseur, studied this marvellous piece of work, there began to creep over me a home-sick feeling, and I seemed to inhale again all the love-odour of those blissful nights upon the terrace. My heart began to beat violently as I was involuntarily drawn on to think of my own marriage; for what happier adornment, than just this, could be invented for the animal which should one day carry Vasitthi, seeing that the "Terrace of the Sorrowless" was famed throughout Kosambi for its wonderful asoka blossoms?

In this dreamy condition, I heard, near me, one woman say to another: "But the bride—she doesn't look at all happy!"

Hardly conscious of what I did, I glanced upward, and a strangely uneasy feeling stole over me as I caught sight of the figure sitting there under the purple baldachin. Figure, I say—the face I couldn't see, because the head was sunk upon the breast—but even of a figure one saw little, and it seemed as if in that mass of rainbow-coloured

muslins, although a body did exist, it was not one gifted with life or any power of resistance. The way in which she swayed hither and thither at every movement of the animal, whose powerful strides caused the tent on his back to rock violently to and fro, had something unutterably sad, something to make one shudder in it. There was really cause to fear that she might at any moment plunge headlong downward. Some such idea may have occurred to the maiden standing behind her, for she laid her hand on the shoulder of the bride, and bent forward, possibly to whisper a word of courage in her ear.

An icy fear all but lamed me as, in the supposed servant, I recognised—Medini. And before this suddenly awakened foreboding had time to grow clear within me, Satagira's bride had raised her head.

It was my Vasitthi.

XII

AT THE GRAVE OF THE HOLY VAJAÇRAVAS

YES, it was she. No possibility of mistaking those features—and yet they in no way resembled hers, were indeed like nothing that I had ever seen—in such nameless, superhuman misery did they seem to be petrified.

When I came to my senses again, the end of the procession was just passing us. My fainting so suddenly was ascribed to the heat and to the crush of people. Utterly without power of volition, I suffered myself to be taken to the next caravanserai.

There I lay down in the darkest corner, with my face to the wall, and remained in the same position for many days, bathed in tears and refusing all food. To our old servant and caravan leader, the same that had accompanied me on my first journey, I gave directions to sell all our wares as quickly as possible—if necessary, even on the most unfavourable terms—as I was too ill to attend to any business. Of a truth, I was able to do nothing but brood upon my inconceivable loss; in addition to which, I did not wish to show myself in the town, lest I should be recognised by some one. Before all things, I desired to keep Vasitthi from learning anything of my presence in Kosambi.

Her picture as I last saw her floated unceasingly before my vision. True, I was indignant at her fickleness, or

rather at her weakness; for I could not fail to realise that only the latter came into question, and that she had not been able to withstand the pressure brought to bear upon her by her parents. That she had not turned her heart to the triumphant son of the Minister was evidenced plainly enough by her attitude and look. But when I remembered her as, standing in the Krishna grove, her whole face transfigured, she had sworn eternal fidelity to me, I did not understand how it was possible for her to yield so soon, and I said to myself, sighing bitterly, that on maidens' oaths no reliance was to be placed. Yet always that face full of deepest misery rose again before me—and, in a moment, all resentment was dispelled and only tenderest pity went surging forth to meet it; so I firmly made up my mind not to add to her trouble by allowing any news of my presence in Kosambi to come to her ears. Never again should she learn anything of me; she would then, beyond all question, believe that I was dead, and would gradually resign herself to her fate, which was, after all, not lacking in outward splendour.

Fortunately, circumstances rendered it possible for my old servant, in an unexpectedly short time, to exchange or sell his wares to great advantage, so that, after but a few days, I was able very early one morning to leave Kosambi with my caravan.

When I passed the western gate on my way out, I turned to take a last look at the city within whose walls I had lived through so much, both of joy and sorrow, that could never be forgotten. A few days before, as I entered the town, I was filled to such a degree with restless anticipation that I had eyes for nothing round about me. Impossible as it may seem, I had thus remained blind to the fact that not only the battle-

ments of the gate, but also the coping of the walls to either side, were hideously decorated with impaled human heads.

There was no room for doubt—these were the heads of the executed robbers from Angulimala's band.

For the first time since I had seen Vasitthi's face under the baldachin, another feeling than that of grief possessed me, and I gazed with unspeakable horror upon these heads, of which the vultures had long since left nothing but the bones, with, at the very most, the pigtails, and here and there a beard whose wild tangle had protected the place on which it grew. So all of them would have been unrecognisable had not his savage red beard betrayed one, and his pigtail wound around on the top of his head, after the manner of the ascetic plait-wearers, another. These two, and without doubt many of the others, had often nodded to me in comrade-like fashion from the camp circle at night; and I remembered with ghastly distinctness how that red beard, flaring in the moonlight, had wagged with merriment on the occasion of the lecture upon the "Stupidity of Night-watchmen." Yes, so realistic was it all that I could almost imagine I still heard the droning laughter from that lipless mouth.

But about the middle of the battlements over the gate, and somewhat raised above the rest, a powerful skull shone forth in the rays of the rising sun and imperiously drew all my attention to itself. How should I not recognise those lines again? He it was who that day forced us all to laugh without himself moving a muscle of his Brahman face. Vajaçravas' head dominated here, while, without doubt, Angulimala's had been put up over the eastern gate. And a curious sensation stole over me as I thought of the

profundity with which the former had in those past days expounded the mysteries of the various modes of capital punishment,—quartering, rending by dogs, impalement, decapitation,—and with what nice care he thereupon sought to prove that the robber should not let himself be caught; but if unfortunately caught, how he must seek by all possible means to escape. Ah! of what help had his science been to him? So little may man avoid his fate, which is, as we know, the fruit of his deeds—it may be in this, it may be in some former life!

To me it seemed as though he looked very earnestly from the hollows of his empty eyes, and his half-open mouth called to me: "Kamanita! Kamanita! Look closely upon me, consider well what thou seest. For thou also, my son, wast born under a robber star, thou also shalt tread the nightly paths of Kali, and, just as I have ended here, so wilt thou also one day end."

Yet, strangely enough, this phantasy, which was vivid as any sense perception, filled me neither with fear nor horror. My—according to this supposition—appointed robber career, to which I had up to this time never given an earnest thought, stood suddenly before me, and not merely not in sober, but even in seductive colours.

Robber chief!—what could be more alluring to me in my misery? For I did not doubt for a moment but that, with my many talents and accomplishments, and particularly with those that I owed to the teaching of Vajaçravas, I should at once take the position of leader. And what position could mean as much to me as that of robber chief? Why, even that of a king would be of little count beside it. For could *it* give me vengeance on

Satagira? Could *it* bring Vasitthi to my arms? I saw myself in the midst of a forest, fighting Satagira, whose skull I split with a powerful stroke of my sword; and again I saw myself as I bore the fainting Vasitthi out of the burning palace, which rang with the voices of robbers.

For the first time since that woeful sight of my lost Vasitthi met my eyes, my heart beat with courage and hope, and I began to think of the future; for the first time, I wished for myself, not death, but life.

Full of such pictures, I had scarcely gone a thousand paces when I saw before me a caravan which, evidently coming from the opposite direction, had halted while its leader, to all appearance, offered up a sacrifice beside a little hillock close to the highway.

I went up to him with a polite greeting, and asked what deity he was here worshipping.

"In this grave," he replied, "rests the holy Vajaçravas, to whose protection I owe it that, passing through a dangerous neighbourhood, I am yet able to reach home safe and without damage to life or property. And I counsel thee earnestly not to neglect to offer up a fitting sacrifice here. For if, when thou enterest the wooded region, thou wert to hire a hundred forest warders, their help would be as nothing to thee compared with the protection of this holy man."

"My dear friend," I replied, "this mound seems to be only a few months old, and if a Vajaçravas lies buried beneath, it certainly will not be any saint, but the robber of that name."

The merchant quietly nodded assent.

"The same . . . certainly . . . I saw him impaled at this spot. And his head is still up over the city gate. But

since he has suffered the punishment imposed by the king, he has, purged thereby from his sins, entered heaven without spot or stain, and his spirit now protects the traveller from robbers. Over and above this, however, people say that even during his robber life-time he was an exceedingly learned and almost saintly man; for he knew even secret parts of the Veda by heart—at least that is said."

"And it is perfectly true," I replied, "for I knew him well, and may even call myself his friend."

As the merchant looked somewhat appalled when I said this, I continued—

"Thou must know that I was once made prisoner by this band, and that at that time Vajaçravas twice saved my life."

The merchant's look passed from fright to envious admiration.

"Then indeed thou canst truly count thyself happy! Did I so stand in his favour, I should in a very few years be the richest man in Kosambi. And now, a prosperous journey to thee, O enviable one!" Saying which, he gave the signal for his caravan to proceed on its way.

I naturally did not neglect to lay an offering for the dead on the grave of my famous and esteemed friend; but my prayer, in contrast to all of the others offered up here, had for its burden that he would lead me straight into the arms of the nearest robber band, to which, with his help, I decided then to join myself, and the leadership of which, as I did not doubt, would of itself soon pass into my hands.

I was presently to see, however, and that plainly, that my learned and, by popular pronouncement, now "sainted" friend had been mistaken when he averred that a robber constellation had shone upon me at my birth. For on

no part of the way to Ujjeni did we see even a trace of robbers, and yet scarcely a week later a caravan we met after we had gone through a large forest hard on the borders of Avanti was fallen upon by robbers in this very wood.

It has been the source of many a curious reflection to me that the purest chance should to all appearance have led to my remaining in civil life, instead of adopting, as my heart so ardently desired, the life of the robber. Not that it is impossible for one of the nightly paths of Kali to lead directly to the path of the pilgrim; just as, of the hundred and one veins filled with quinque-coloured fluid, but a single one leads to the head, and is that one by which, at death, the soul leaves the body.

So also it is quite possible that even had I become a robber, I might nevertheless have been a pilgrim now, and on the way, with salvation as my goal. Besides, when a man has attained to salvation, all his works, whether good or bad, disappear, burnt to ashes, as it were, in the fervour of his knowledge.

Moreover, the interval, had it been given to the life of the robber rather than to civil life, might not, in so far as its moral fruits are concerned, have fallen out so differently as thou wouldst expect, O brother. For, during the time I dwelt among the robbers, I came to know that there are among them many different types, of which some possess most excellent qualities, and that, certain external features apart, the difference between robbers and honest folks is not quite so vast as the latter would fain have us believe. And, furthermore, in the ripe period of life on which I now entered, I could not help noticing that the honest folks dabbled in the handiwork of the thieves and robbers—a number of them, as opportunity offered, and, as it were,

improvising; others regularly, and with great as well as, so far as they personally were concerned, highly profitable skill, so that by mutually lessening the dividing distance, not a little contact, even, took place between the groups.

For which reason I am really unable to say whether I have or have not, by the help of the favouring fate which held me back from the nightly paths of the goddess-dancer with her swaying necklace of human skulls, actually won so very much.

After this profound reflection, the pilgrim Kamanita became silent, and turned his eyes, lost in thought, on the full moon, which rose large and glowing into the heavens directly over the distant forest—the haunt of the robbers—and flooded with a stream of light the open hall of the potter, where it seemed to transform the yellow mantle of the Master into pure gold, like to the raiment of some godlike image.

The Lord Buddha—on whom the pilgrim, attracted by the splendour, but without having the smallest inkling of the identity of him whom he beheld, involuntarily turned his gaze—indicated his sympathy by a measured inclination of the head, and said—

"Still I but see thee, pilgrim, turning thy steps rather towards home than homelessness, although the path to the latter had of a truth opened itself to thee with sufficient plainness."

"Even so, O Reverend One! My dim eyes failed to see the path to freedom, and I took my way, as thou sayest, to the home."

The pilgrim sighed deeply, and by and by, in a fresh, clear voice, resumed the record of his experiences.

XIII

THE BOON COMPANION

THE end of the matter was that I continued to reside in the house of my parents in Ujjeni.

This, my native town, O stranger, is, as all the world knows, famed throughout India not less for its revels and unstinted enjoyment of life than for its shining palaces and magnificent temples. Its broad streets resound by day with the neighing of horses and the trumpeting of elephants, and by night with the music of lovers' lutes and the songs of gay carousers.

But of all the glories of Ujjeni, none enjoy a reputation so extraordinary as do its courtesans. From the great ladies who live in palaces, building temples to the gods, laying out public parks for the people, and in whose reception-rooms one meets poets, artists, and actors, distinguished strangers, and, occasionally, even princes, down to the common wenches, all are beauties with softly swelling limbs and indescribable grace. At all great festivals, in processions and exhibitions, they form the chief adornment of the beflagged and flower-strewn streets. In crimson dresses, with fragrant wreaths in their hands, the air about them heavy with delicious odours, their attire sparkling with diamonds, dost thou see them, O brother, sitting on their own magnificent grand-stands or moving along the streets, with glances full of

love, seductive gestures, and playfully laughing words, everywhere fanning the heated senses of the pleasure-seekers to living flame?

Honoured by the king, worshipped by the people, besung by the poets, they are fitly named "the many-coloured floral crown of the rock-enthroned Ujjeni," and draw down upon us the envy of the less favoured neighbouring towns. Not unfrequently the choicest of our beauties go to these places as guests, and it actually happens that one or another of them has to be recalled by royal decree.

To the lips of one who, like myself, desired to drown the grief that was eating away his life, the golden cup of pleasure, filled to the brim with its intoxicating Lethe draught, was freely—nay, prodigally—held by the fair hands of this joyous sisterhood. Owing to my many talents and wide knowledge of the fine arts, and, not less, of all social games, I became a favoured guest of the great courtesans, of whom one indeed, whose favour could scarcely be measured by gold, fell so passionately in love with me that she quarrelled with a prince on my account. On the other hand, owing to my complete mastery of the robber dialect, I was soon on confidential terms with the wenches of the low streets, whose company, on the path of pleasure of a coarser and more robust type, I by no means despised, and of whom several were heart and soul devoted to me.

Thus madly did I dive deep down into the rushing whirl of the pleasures of my native city, and it became, O stranger, a proverbial saying in Ujjeṇi: "As fast as young Kamanita."

It was about this time that an event occurred which goes to show that evil habits, and sometimes even vice, may

to such an extent be the source of good fortune that the man of worldly mind cannot easily decide whether he most owes his prosperity to his good or to his bad qualities.

I refer particularly to that familiarity with the wenches of the lower classes to which allusion has already been made, and which became of the greatest service to me. My father's house was broken into, and jewels, which had been for the most part entrusted to him for valuation, were stolen, to an amount, too, which it was practically impossible to make good. I was beside myself, for absolute ruin stared us in the face. In vain did I make use of all the knowledge I had gained in the forest. From the fashion in which the subterranean passage was constructed, I could easily tell to what class of thief the deed was to be ascribed. But even this most useful hint proved useless to the police, who, to be sure, do not, in Ujjeni, occupy the high position taken by the institution of the courtesans, —a circumstance not without suggestion of some inner relationship between the two bodies. On one occasion, in a very learned lecture on the love affairs of the various classes, I heard with my own ears the following sentence: "The gallantries of the police officer have to take place during his nightly round of inspection, and with the courtesans of the city. By order." Which, taken in connection with Vajaçravas' remarks upon "the service rendered by the city courtesans in hoodwinking the police," gave me, in those days of anxious waiting, much food for thought.

Now, however, in this strangest of all worlds of ours, things seem to be so arranged that the left hand must make good what the right has done amiss. And that is what happened here. For that flourishing blossom

from Ujjeni's flower-garden actually yielded me the fruit which the thorny hedge of the police—perhaps stunted just on account of that very same flourishing condition of the said blossom—failed to ripen.

These kind maidens, seeing me in despair because of the ruin threatening me and mine, discovered the culprits, and forced them, by threatening the complete withdrawal of their favour, to hand over the plunder, so that we got off leniently with the loss of the little that had already been spent, and with a fright which did not fail of its effect in my own case.

It woke me up from the dissipated life in which I was uselessly squandering the best of my years and strength. For, quite apart from this waking up and its occasion, my folly had now reached a point where it was certain either, in the garb of habit, to enslave and deprave me utterly, or, on the contrary, to fill me with gradually increasing disgust. This latter result was now very much hastened by the experience I had just had. I had seen poverty staring me in the face—the poverty to which the life I had been leading would have handed me over defenceless, after it had, with all its costly pleasures, treacherously left me in the lurch. At this juncture I bethought me of the words uttered by the merchant at the grave of Vajaçravas: "Did I stand so high in Vajaçravas' favour as thou dost, I should in a very few years be the richest man in Kosambi."

And I resolved to become the richest man in Ujjeni, and to this end, to devote myself with all my strength to the caravan traffic.

I carried out my resolutions; and whether my friend and master Vajaçravas, from his abode in the other world, did or did not stand by me in his own person in all my

undertakings I dare not certainly say, although I have at times believed it; but this much is certain, that his words in their after-effects now did. For my having become familiar, through his teaching, with all the customs and usages of the various types of robbers, and my having even been initiated into the mysteries of their secret rules, now placed me in a position where I was able, and that without ridiculous foolhardiness, to carry to a successful conclusion enterprises which another would never have dared to venture on. But just such I now selected, and no longer condescended to the ordinary routes.

As a result, when I conducted a large caravan to a town to which, for months, no other merchant had been able to proceed, because powerful bands of robbers had, as it were, cut off the district from all intercourse with the outer world, I found the inhabitants so desperately anxious to buy my wares that I was at times able to dispose of these at ten times the usual profit. But that was not all; for inestimable was the advantage I drew from my old friend's instruction with regard to "the distinguishing marks of officials, both of higher and lower rank, who are open to bribery, with reliable notes as to each man's price," and what I gained in the course of a few years by the skilful use of these hints alone, represents a modest fortune.

So several years passed, during which the various delights of my pleasure-loving native city alternated healthily with the hardships of business journeys, rich indeed in dangers, but nevertheless by no means barren of pleasure, in spite of all perils; for in strange cities I always resided with a courtesan to whom I was as a rule recommended by some mutual friend—some one of the

fair ones of Ujjeni—and who not only played the part of hostess but, as often happened, formed my business connections for me very shrewdly as well.

Such was the tenor of my life when, one forenoon, my father came to my room.

At the moment I was busy putting some lac on my lips, only pausing from time to time to shout directions to a servant who had led my horse out into the courtyard in front of my window and was saddling him. The special care required on the present occasion was due to a unique contrivance by which cushions were to be strapped on in front of the saddle for a gazelle-eyed beauty I was to hold there. An outing had been arranged for the afternoon to a public garden, and I was going with some friends of both sexes.

I welcomed my father, and was about to call for refreshments; but he stopped me, and when I offered him some sweet-scented cashoos from my golden box, he declined these also, and only took some betel. I concluded at once from this, and not without misgiving, that my respected parent had something on his mind.

"I see that thou art getting ready for a pleasure excursion, my son," he said, after he had taken the seat I offered him, "and I cannot blame thee, seeing that thou art but just returned from a fatiguing business journey. Whither dost thou go to-day, my son?"

"It is my intention, father, to ride with some friends of both sexes to the Garden of the Hundred Lotus Ponds, where we are to amuse ourselves with games."

"Excellent, most excellent, my son! Charming, delightful is an afternoon in the Garden of the Hundred Lotus Ponds—the deep shade of the trees and the cooling

breath of the waters invite the guest to loiter there. And well-bred and ingenious games are most praiseworthy, for they exercise body and mind without straining them. I wonder whether the games are still in vogue that we used to play in my youth? What dost thou suppose, Kamanita, will be played there to-day?"

"It depends, father, whose proposal proves to be most acceptable. I know that Nimi wants to propose spraying with water."

"I don't know it," said my father.

"No; Nimi learnt it in the South, where it is all the fashion. The players fill bamboo canes with water and spray one another, and whoever becomes wettest has lost. It is very amusing. But Kolliya thinks of suggesting kadamba."

My father shook his head—

"I don't know that either."

"Oh! that is much in favour at present. The players first divide into two parties. These then attack one another, and the branches of the kadamba shrub with its great golden blossoms serve as magnificent weapons. The wounds are recognisable from the dust of the blossoms, so that the umpires are able to decide without difficulty which party has won. The game is bracing, and has something dainty about it. I myself, however, intend to propose the wedding game."

"That is a good old game," said my father, with a decided smirk, "and I am greatly delighted that thou art minded to propose it, as it is an evidence of thy sentiments. From play to earnest, the step is not an excessively long one."

As he said this, he again smirked, with such evident satisfaction that it made my very flesh creep.

"Yes, my son," he went on, "talking of that leads me straight to what brought me to thee to-day. Thou hast, on thy many business journeys, by thy capacity and good fortune multiplied our possessions many times over, so that the prosperity of our business has become proverbial in Ujjeni. On the other hand, however, thou hast also quaffed the delights of youth's freedom in unstinted draughts. As a result of the former, thou art well able to provide for a household of thine own. And from the latter, it follows that it is also time for thee to do so, and to think of spinning the thread of our race farther. In order to make things very easy for thee, my dear son, I have sought out a bride for thee in advance. She is the eldest daughter of our neighbour Sanjaya, the great merchant, and has but recently reached the marriageable age. As thou dost perceive, she comes from a family of like standing with our own, respected and very rich, and she has a large number of relatives both on her father's and mother's side. Her body is faultless; her hair, of the blackness of the bee; her face, like the moon in its beauty; eyes, like a young gazelle's; a nose like a blossom of the sesame; teeth like pearls; and bimba lips, from which there comes the voice of the kokila, so rarely sweet is it. And her limbs delight the heart as does the stem of the young pisang; while her full hips lend to her carriage the easy majesty of the royal elephant. It is not possible, therefore, that thou canst have aught to object to in her."

I had indeed nothing to find fault with, save perhaps that her many and so poetically extolled charms left me utterly cold. And I own that, among the details of the wedding ceremonial, that prescribing three nights of continence during which, in the company of my young wife, eating no

seasoned food, sleeping on the floor, and keeping the hearth-fire alight, I had, according to the ordinance, to preserve the strictest chastity, was, of all others, the least irksome to me.

An unloved wife, O brother, does not make home dear, nor its four walls attractive, so I betook myself on journeys almost more willingly than before, and in the intervals concerned myself solely with business matters. And as I—to give the truth its due—did not in these deal too scrupulously, but without much hesitation took what was to my own advantage on every occasion, my riches increased to such an extent that, after a few years, I found myself near to the goal of my ambition, and was one of the richest citizens of my native town.

With that happy state of things came the desire, as master of a house and father of a family—my wife had in the meantime borne me two daughters—to taste the sweets of my riches very fully, and in especial to make a display of them before my fellow-citizens. To that end I purchased a large tract of land in the suburbs, and laid out a magnificent pleasure-garden, in the midst of which I built a spacious mansion, with halls whose ceilings were borne aloft on marble pillars. This property was reckoned among the marvels of Ujjeni, and even the king came to see it.

Within these fair domains I now gave fabulous garden festivals and the most luxurious of banquets. I had begun to devote myself more and more to the pleasures of the table. The most luscious viands which were by any possibility, each in his season, to be had for money, had to appear on my table even at ordinary meals. At that time I was not, as thou dost now see me, lean and wasted by lone

wanderings, by life in the woods, and ascetic exercises, but of a full habit of body—indeed, even inclined to be somewhat portly.

And it became, O stranger, a proverbial saying in Ujjeni: "His table is like the merchant Kamanita's."

XIV

THE HUSBAND

ONE morning I was walking back and forth in the grounds with my head gardener, considering where improvements could be best introduced, when my father, on his old ass, rode into the courtyard.

I hastened forward, and, after helping him to dismount, was about to go into the garden with him, as I believed he had come to enjoy the beauty of our flowers. But he preferred to enter the first room that offered, and when I ordered my man to bring refreshments he declined—he wished to speak to me without being disturbed.

Overcome by a feeling of uneasiness, and scenting danger ahead, I sat down on a low seat beside him.

"My son," he began, in a tone of deepest earnestness, "thy wife has hitherto borne thee but two daughters, and there is no prospect that she will present thee with a son. Now, it is said, and with much truth, that the man dies miserably for whom there is no son to offer the sacrifices proper to the dead. I don't blame thee, my son," he added hastily, perhaps observing that I became somewhat restless; and, although I was not aware how in this matter I could have deserved blame, I thanked him with becoming humility for his clemency, and kissed his hand.

"No, I must blame myself, because in choosing thy wife, I allowed myself to be dazzled in too great a degree by worldly considerations, having reference to family and

possessions, and did not observe the characteristic marks sufficiently. The girl whom I now have in mind for thee comes, it is true, of a family by no means distinguished, and far from rich; nor can one praise her for her possession of what the superficial observer calls beauty. But, by way of recompense, she has a navel which sits deep and is turned to the right; both hands and feet bear lotus, urn, and wheel moles; her hair is quite smooth, save only on her neck where she has two locks curling to the right. Of a maiden who possesses such marks, the wise say that she will bear five heroic sons."

I declared myself perfectly satisfied with the prospect, thanked my father for the kindness with which he thought for me, and said I was ready to lead the maiden home at once. For I thought to myself, "Well—if it has to be . . ."

"At once!" cried out my father, in accents of horror. "But, my son, moderate thy impatience! We are at present in the southern course of the sun. When this deity enters his northern course, and we have reached the half of the month in which the moon waxes, then will we choose a favourable day for joining hands—but not before—not before, my son! Else what would all the bride's good qualities do for us?"

I begged my father to have no anxiety. I would have patience for the time mentioned, and would in all things be guided by his wisdom; on which he praised my dutifulness, gave me his blessing, and allowed me to order refreshments.

At last the day—for which I did not ardently long, but on which all the propitious signs were found to be united—approached. The ceremonies were this time much more tedious. Full fourteen days did I need beforehand, in order

to master all the necessary sentences. The agony of fear I endured during the joining of hands in the house of my father-in-law, it is hardly possible to put into words. I trembled without intermission, filled with a horrible dread lest I should not recite some verse correctly, or in keeping with the action to which it belonged; for my father would assuredly never have forgiven me for it. And yet, in my anxiety, I had almost forgotten the chief thing, for instead of taking the bride's thumb, I reached out to seize her four fingers, as though I wished her to bear me daughters—but luckily she had presence of mind enough to push her thumb into my hand.

I was literally bathed in perspiration when finally able to yoke in the bulls for our departure, the while my bride inserted into each of the collar-holes, the branch of a fruit-bearing tree. And I spoke the required couplet, with a feeling that the worst was now past. The dangers, however, did not by any means lie behind us yet.

It is true we reached the house without encountering any of the numerous little mishaps which, on such occasions, seem to lie in wait for their unfortunate victims. And at the door the bride was lifted from the wagon by three Brahman women of blameless life who had all given birth to boys, and whose husbands yet lived. So far, all had gone well. But now, brother, imagine the shock I received when, on entering the house, my wife's foot *all but* touched the threshold. To this day, I cannot conceive whence I drew the resolution to lift her high up in my arms, and thereby hinder any such contact from possibly taking place. Nevertheless, even this was an irregularity, and, when entering the house, was of itself bad enough; but, to add to it, I, for my own part, forgot to enter with the right foot first. Fortunately, the

wedding guests, and especially my father, were so nearly beside themselves at the threatened contact with the threshold, that my false step was all but entirely disregarded.

In the middle of the house I took my station to the left of my wife, on a red bull's hide that lay with the neck towards the east, and with the hairy side uppermost. Now my father had, after a long search, and with endless trouble, come upon a male prodigy that had only brothers and no sisters—not even dead ones—and was the son of a father who had been in like case, having had brothers only. Moreover, this was actually true of his grandfather also; and, to the accuracy of the statements in each case, legal testimony was forthcoming. This little boy was to be placed on my bride's knee. Already there stood at her side the copper dish containing lotus flowers from the swamps, which she was to lay in the folded hands of the child, and everything was prepared, when—the hapless little urchin was nowhere to be found! Not till afterwards, when it was too late, did a man-servant discover that the child had found the sacrificial bed, between the fires, all too enticing, and had rolled himself in the soft grass till he was practically buried in it. Now, of course, the sacrificial bed had to be made up anew, and to that end fresh kuça grass cut—which was in itself reversing the due order of things, as the grass had to be cut at the rising of the sun.

We were finally obliged, as I have indicated, to do without this crown of the whole function, and to content ourselves with the hastily procured son of a mother who had borne only sons. But my father was in such a state of excitement at the failure of this precaution, on which he had built his highest hopes, that I feared a fit of apoplexy

would suddenly put an end to his precious life. True, he would, under no circumstances, have committed the indiscretion of dying at that moment, in order not to interrupt the ceremonies in the worst of all possible ways. But this comforting reflection did not occur to me at the time. Martyred by the most horrible fears, I was obliged, in order that no interval might ensue, to pass the time of waiting for the substitute in reciting appropriate sentences, without a pause.

That hour I solemnly promised myself that, come what might, I would never marry again.

Finally, after everything was ended, I was obliged to spend twelve nights with my wife—who, by the bye, was anything but the monster of ugliness my father's description had led me to expect—in absolute chastity, fasting rigorously, and sleeping on the floor. This time it was *twelve* nights, because my father thought it was better to be on the safe side, and do too much rather than too little. But the doing was distinctly painful to me, particularly inasmuch as I had to deprive myself, during the whole time, of my favourite dishes—high seasonings and all.

However, this period of probation also I managed to survive, and life ran on again on the old lines, though soon with a very material difference. I was ere long to see how thoroughly warranted was my aversion from my father's new marriage proposal. True, I had instantly comforted myself with the idea that, if a man had one wife, he might just as well have two. But alas, how sadly had I deceived myself!

My first wife had always seemed to possess a gentle character, which, if anything, rather leaned to the side of dullness than to that of irritable passion; and my second wife had always been praised for her true womanly soft-

ness. In the same way, O brother, are water and the hearth-fire both of them very truly beneficial possessions; yet when they meet on the hearth, one must be prepared for hissing. And from that unhappy day onward there was the noise of hissing in my home. But imagine to thyself, if thou canst, what it became when my second wife did really bear me the first of those five heroic sons. Now, my first wife accused me of not having wanted sons by her, and of having refrained from offering the fitting sacrifices, in order that I might thus have an excuse for marrying another; while my second wife, when she was irritated by the first, performed a very devil's dance of triumphant scorn. Then, between the two, there was a constant wrangle as to precedence; my first wife laying claim to the first position as having actually been the first, while the second made the same demand as the mother of my son. But worse was yet to come. One day my second wife dashed in to me, trembling from head to foot with excitement, and demanded that I should send the first away, as she wished to poison my son: the boy had, as it happened, had an attack of colic from eating sweets. I rebuked her severely, but had scarcely freed myself from her presence, when the first stood before me, clamouring that her two lambs were not sure of their lives so long as that vile woman remained in the house—her rival wished to get both of my little daughters out of the way, in order that their dowries should not diminish the heritage of her son.

So, under my roof, peace was no longer to be found. If thou, O brother, didst chance to delay thy steps at the farmhouse of the rich Brahman who lives but a short way off, and didst hear how, within, his two wives upbraided one another—disputing in high, shrill tones,

and polluting the air with their coarse epithets—then thou hast, so to speak, passed my house on the way.

And it also became, I am sorry to confess, a proverbial saying in Ujjenī now: "The two agree like Kamanita's wives!"

XV

THE BALD-PATED MONK

SUCH was the state of affairs in my home, when, one forenoon, I sat in a large room which lay on the shady side of the house, and was set apart for the transaction of all business matters. For that reason it overlooked the courtyard, an arrangement which enabled me to keep under my own eye everything relating to the administration of my affairs. Before me stood a trusted servant, who had during a number of years accompanied me on all my journeys, and to whom I was giving exact instructions with regard to the taking of a caravan to a somewhat distant spot, as well, of course, as to the best mode of disposing of his wares when he got there, the produce he had to bring back with him, the business connections he was to form, and other similar matters; for it was my intention to give him full charge of the expedition.

To be sure, my house was less home-like than ever, and one might suppose that I myself would have been glad to embrace every opportunity of roaming about in distant lands. But I was beginning to be somewhat self-indulgent and dainty, and shunned very distant journeys, not only because of the fatigues to be faced on the way, but, above all, on account of the sparing diet to be put up with, at all events when actually on the road. Yet even supposing the journey's end reached, with the possibility of making up for lost time and of having the best of everything,

there were numerous disappointments to be reckoned with, and I, at least, was never able to dine abroad as I did at home.

As a result, I had begun to send out my caravans under trusty leaders while I remained behind in Ujjeni.

Well, as I was saying, I was in the midst of giving my caravan leader very minute and well-considered instructions, when from the courtyard we heard the quarrelsome voices of my two wives, both much louder than usual, and with a flow of language which sounded as though it would never end. Irritated by this tiresome interruption, I finally sprang up and, after having vainly looked out at the window, stepped into the courtyard.

There I saw both of my wives standing at the outer gate. But far from finding them wrangling with one another, as I had expected, I came upon them for the first time of one mind; they had discovered and pounced upon a common enemy and on him they now poured out the vials of their united wrath. This luckless beggar was a wandering ascetic, who stood there leaning against one of the pillars of the gate, and quietly letting this stream of abuse flow over him. The actual reason for their attack upon him I have never discovered; I imagine, however, that the mother instinct, which was very highly developed in both, scented in this self-denier, a traitor to the sacred cause of human propagation and a foe to their sex, and that they had just as instinctively fallen upon him as two mongooses upon a cobra.

"Out upon him, the bald-headed priest, the shameless ruffian! Just see how he stands there, with his bent shoulders and hang-dog look, breathing piety and contemplation—the oily hypocrite, the smooth-faced windbag! It is the kitchen pot that he peers and gazes, sniffs and snuffles

at—just like any old ass who, unyoked from his cart, runs to the rubbish-heap in the courtyard and peers and gazes and sniffs and snuffles. . . . Out upon him, the lazy, brazen-faced thief, the shameless beggar, the bald-pated monk! "

The object of these and similar expressions of maternal contempt, a pilgrim belonging to some ascetic school and a man of strikingly lofty stature, still stood leaning against the gate-post in an attitude of easy repose. His mantle, of the yellow colour of the kanikara flower, and not unlike thine own, fell in picturesque folds over his left shoulder to his feet, and gave the impression of covering a powerfully built body. The right arm, which hung limply down, was uncovered, and I could not help admiring the huge coil of muscles, which rather seemed to be the well-earned possession of a warrior than the idle inheritance of an ascetic; and even the clay alms-bowl appeared, in his nervous hand, to be as strange and incongruous as an iron bludgeon in that same hand would have seemed to be in its proper place. His head was bent, his gaze fixed on the ground, his mouth absolutely without expression, and he stood motionless there, as though some masterly artist had hewn the statue of a wandering ascetic in stone, had painted and clothed it, and as though I had thereupon caused it to be set up at my gate—it might be, as a symbol of my liberality.

This tranquillity of his, which I held to be meekness, but which my two wives regarded as contempt, naturally goaded the latter to ever greater efforts; and so they would probably have passed to actual violence, had I not come between, rebuked them for their evil tempers, and driven them into the house. Then I went up to the ascetic, bowed respectfully before him, and said—

" I trust, O most Reverend One, that thou wilt not take to heart what these two women, whose understanding is hardly of two fingers' breadth, may have said : I know it has been both uncalled for and unfitting. I trust that thou wilt not, on that account, strike this house with thine ascetic anger. I will, most Reverend Pilgrim, myself fill thine alms-bowl with the best the house has to offer—how fortunate that the bowl is yet empty! I will fill it so that it cannot contain another morsel and no neighbour shall, this day, earn merit by feeding thee. Thou art indeed not come to the wrong door, O most Reverend One; and I believe the food will be to thy taste, for it is even a proverbial saying in Ujjeni : " His table is like the merchant Kamanita's " ; and I am he. I trust, therefore, O Reverend One, that thou wilt not be angry at what has taken place, and wilt not curse my house."

Whereupon the ascetic answered, and with no appearance of unfriendliness—

"How could I, in my position, be angry, O head of thy house, at such abuse, seeing that it is my duty to be even grateful for far coarser treatment ? For, once, in the past, I betook myself, girt betimes, and supplied with mantle and alms-bowl, into a town to collect food from the charitable. But in that town, Mara, the Evil One, had just then stirred up the Brahmans and the householders against the Order of the Holy One. ' Away with your virtuous, noble-minded ascetics ! Abuse them, insult, drive them away, pursue them.' And so it happened, O head of thy house, as I passed along the street, that, one moment, a stone flew at my head ; the next, a broken dish struck me in the face, and a stick which followed half crushed my arm. But when, with head all cut, and covered with blood, with broken bowl and rent mantle, I

returned to the Master, his words were: 'Have patience, ascetic, have patience! For the deed whose atonement would have cost thee many years of the torments of hell—that deed will be atoned for in thy lifetime.'"

At the first sound of his voice, there quivered through me from head to foot a flash of horror, and, with every additional word, an icy coldness penetrated deeper into the very recesses of my being. For that was, O brother, the voice of Angulimala, the robber—how could I doubt it? And when my convulsive glance fixed itself on his face, I recognised that also, although his beard formerly went almost up to his eyes and his hair grew down deep into his forehead, whereas he now stood bald and shaven before me. But too well did I recognise again the eyes under those bushy, coalescing eyebrows, although instead of, as in those days, darting only flashes of rage at me, they now, with deep dissimulation, looked kindness itself; and the sinewy fingers which encircled the alms-bowl—they were assuredly the same that had once clutched my throat like devilish talons.

"How should I indeed, O head of thy house," my gruesome guest went on, "how should I indeed grow angry at abuse? Has not the Master said, 'Even if, O ye disciples, your limbs and members should be cut off, by robbers and murderers, with a cross-cut saw, ye would not fulfil my commands, if ye should thereupon give place to rage.'"

When I, O brother, heard these words, with their diabolically concealed, yet to me so evident, threat, my legs shook under me, and to such a degree that I had to hold on to the wall in order not to fall down.

With the greatest difficulty I managed to pull myself together so far as to indicate to the robber-ascetic, more by

gesture than by my few stammered words, that he was to have patience until I should procure him the food.

Then I hurried, as rapidly as my shaking legs would carry me, straight over the courtyard into the large kitchen, where just at that moment the midday meal for the whole household as well as for my own family was being prepared, and where from every pot and pan there came the sounds of roasting and boiling. Here I chose, with no less haste than care, the best and most savoury morsels. Armed with a golden ladle, and followed by a whole troop of servants bearing dishes, I dashed again into the courtyard, in order to wait upon, and, if possible, conciliate my fearful guest.

But Angulimala had disappeared.

XVI

READY FOR ACTION

HALF-SWOONING, I sat down upon a bench. My brain, however, began to work again at once. Angulimala had been there, of that there could be no doubt; and the reason for his coming was only too clear to me. How many tales had I not heard of his implacability and greed for vengeance! Moreover, I had had the misfortune to slay his best friend, and, from my residence with the robbers, I well knew that friendship among them does not count for less than among highly respectable citizens—indeed, if anything, for much more. At the time when I was his prisoner, Angulimala couldn't kill me without sinning against the laws of the "Senders" and at the same time putting an indelible blot upon his robber honour; yet he nevertheless all but did it twice over. Now, however, he had at last been able to seek out this land, in spite of its lying so far from the scene of his wonted activity, and evidently intended to make up for that past omission. In the disguise of an ascetic he had succeeded in leisurely surveying the places in the neighbourhood, and, without doubt, had resolved to act that same night. Even if he had by any chance perceived that I recognised him, he dared not delay, for this was the last night of the dark half of the month, and to carry out such an enterprise in the light half would have been an offence against the sacred laws of the robbers, and would have brought down

upon him the angry vengeance of the bloodthirsty goddess Kali.

I at once ordered my best horse to be saddled, and rode into town to the palace of the king. I could easily have obtained an audience, but, to my disappointment, learned that he was just then residing at one of his distant hunting seats. I was therefore obliged to be content with a visit to the Minister of State. As it happened, this was the very same man who had conducted the fateful embassy to Kosambi, and in whose protection, as thou wilt remember, I did not travel back. Now, from that day on which I had refused to follow him, he was not very friendly to me, as I had noticed on several occasions when we chanced to meet; in addition to which, I knew he had frequently criticised my mode of life. To have to bring this matter before him was not exactly agreeable; its justification, however, and even merit, were so apparent that here, as it seemed, there was no room left for personal likes or dislikes.

I related to him, therefore, as shortly and clearly as possible, what had taken place in my courtyard, and added the all but self-understood petition that a division of troops might be stationed for the night in my house and garden, for the double purpose of defending my property from the certain attack of the robbers, and of capturing as many of these as possible.

The Minister heard me in silence, and with an unfathomable smile on his face. Then he said—

"My good Kamanita; I do not know whether thou hast already indulged in an early and very heavy draught, or art still suffering from the effects of one of thy famous nightly banquets which have become the proverb of Ujjeni; or, indeed, whether thou mayst not have ruined thine inner organs to such an extent by thy no less pro-

verbial than remarkable spiced dishes, as to have evil dreams, and not only by night but also in broad daylight! For as such I am compelled to designate this interesting tale, particularly as we know it is long since Angulimala ceased to sojourn among the living."

"But that was a false rumour, as we now see," I called out impatiently.

"*I* by no means see it," he replied sharply. "There can be no question in this instance of a false rumour, for a short time after the affair Satagira himself related to me in Kosambi that Angulimala had died in the underground dungeons of the Ministerial Palace, under torture; and I myself saw his head on one of the spikes over the eastern gate."

"I do not know whose head thou didst there see," I cried, "but this I do know, that one hour ago I saw the head of Angulimala safe and sound on his shoulders, and that, far from meriting thy mockery, I deserve that thou, on the contrary, shouldst thank me for giving thee the opportunity . . ."

"Of killing a dead man and making a fool of myself," the Minister interrupted me. "Much obliged!"

"Then I beg thee at least to remember that this is not a matter which concerns the first best estate thou mayst hear of, but relates to a mansion and grounds reckoned among the wonders of Ujjeni, and inspected by our gracious king himself with great admiration. He will not thank thee if Angulimala reduce all these splendours of his capital to ashes."

"Oh! that troubles me little," said the Minister, laughing. "Take my advice: go home, calm thyself by a short sleep, and don't let the matter disturb thee further. For the rest, the whole affair arises from this, that thou didst plunge

thyself into a gallant adventure that year in Kosambi, and, in thy headstrong folly, didst fling my words to the winds rather than return with me. Hadst thou listened then, Angulimala would never have made thee prisoner, and thou wouldst not now have been tormented by an empty and baseless fear. Moreover, thy month-long life in the company of that robber pack did not improve thy morals, as we all of us here in Ujjeni have perceived."

He launched out into a few additional moral platitudes, and then dismissed me.

Even before I reached home I was considering what was to be done, seeing that I was now thrown on my own resources. Arrived there, I had all the movable treasures —costly carpets, inlaid tables, and similar matters—carried into the courtyard and loaded on wagons, in order to have them conveyed to a place of safety in the inner town. At the same time I had weapons distributed among all my people; both wagons and weapons being forthcoming in abundance, owing to the fact that the caravan was in course of preparation. But I didn't let things rest there. My first measure was to send several trusted servants into the town, in order, by the promise of a handsome reward, to enlist for the night courageous and capable fighting men. For any other, this would have been, it is true, a hazardous proceeding, for how easily might such fellows at the critical moment make common cause with the assailants. But I relied upon certain female friends, who recommended to my servants only trustworthy rascals—that is, fellows really capable of anything, but to whom their solemnly pledged word and earnest-money, once accepted, were sacred. As I knew this raff and their curious customs, I was well aware of what I was doing.

During these preparations, as I had no time myself to

go to my wives, I sent a servant to each of them, with instructions that they should hold themselves in readiness —the first with her two daughters, the second with her little son—to move into town to the paternal home. That it was only to be for one night, I didn't let them know, because I had very wisely considered that, once there, they might as well stay a week or longer, and I should meanwhile enjoy an unexpected time of peace at home—supposing, of course, that I succeeded in beating off the attack. Just as little did I let them know the reason for this arrangement, because one should never give reasons to women.

Meantime the work went on, and I was on the point of making a stirring speech to my armed servants, recurring to an old practice which had been mine when danger threatened on our caravan journeys, and which had always been attended with excellent results, when, with one accord, and as if by prearrangement, my two wives dashed out of separate doors into the courtyard, an air of consternation on their faces and screaming loudly, so that every one looked round at them, and I was forced to interrupt my speech ere it was well begun.

The first dragged her two little daughters, the second my little son, with her. No sooner had they reached me than they pointed each at the other, and shrieked simultaneously—

"So at last this base woman has succeeded in turning thy heart against me, so that thou dost drive me forth and dost lay upon me, thy faithful wife, the disgrace of being sent back to my father's house, with thine innocent little daughters (with thy poor little son) . . ."

The foaming rage that possessed them, aggravated by

their naturally narrow understanding, brought it to pass that neither perceived how the other accused her of the very same thing which she herself brought forward, and complained of the same hard fate which she herself bewailed as her own, and that, without question, there must be a mistake somewhere. Far from suspecting anything of the kind, they screamed and howled on, tearing their hair and striking their breasts with their fists, until at last, as if by way of relaxation, each began to pour out upon her supposed victorious rival abuse which, in its coarseness, far surpassed anything I had ever heard even in the company of women of ill-fame.

Finally, I did succeed in making myself heard, and also in making clear to them, if with no little difficulty, that they had utterly misunderstood my message, that neither of them was to be sent to her own parents, but to my father's house, and by no means as a punishment or as a sign of my displeasure, but solely on account of their own and their children's safety. When, however, I saw that they at last fully understood this, I could no longer contain myself, but cried out—

"This is what you have from your unbearable rudeness; learn at last to behave yourselves in seemly fashion! This is what your 'bald-pated monk' has done for you! Who, do you suppose, that was? It was Angulimala, the robber, the horrible fiend, who slays human beings and hangs their thumbs about his neck. *He* it is whom you have abused, he, whom you have angered! A miracle that he didn't beat you to death with his alms-bowl. But we others, if any of us should fall into his hands, will have to pay to the uttermost farthing, and who knows whether ye yourselves are safe from him, even in my father's house."

When my wives at last fully comprehended the meaning of my words, they forthwith began to scream as if they already felt the knife at their throats, and wanted to rush out at the gate with their children. I had them stopped, however, and then carefully explained that for the present no danger was to be feared, because Angulimala, as I well knew, would not attack us before midnight. Then I bade them go back into our dwelling and pack all the things together which they and the children would be likely to need during the time that the danger from robbers compelled them to remain in town. This they then at once did.

At the same time I had quite overlooked the possible effect of my words on my people. And that, as I soon discovered, was anything but agreeable. For when they learned that it was the terrible Angulimala, long since believed to be dead, that had spied out my house, and would certainly attack it in the night, first one and then another slunk quietly away, till, finally, they threw down their arms by dozens, and declared that they would have nothing to do with such a devil—that no one could possibly ask it of them. Those also who had been enlisted in the town, and of whom the first comers arrived just then, when they heard how things stood, said that that was not what they had bargained for, and withdrew. Only about twenty of my own people, at their head the brave steward of my house, professed they would not leave me, but would defend the place to the last drop of their blood; for they all could see that I was determined not to sacrifice this splendid property in which my heart was wrapped up, but, if need were, to perish with it.

Several resolute fellows from the town, attracted almost more by the prospect of a hot fight than by the money;

and who not only did not fear the name of Angulimala, but talked themselves into the belief that, after they had fought well and been taken prisoner, they would be enrolled in the band—several such desperate characters joined themselves to us, and so I finally had command of about forty well-armed and brave men.

Meanwhile, evening was almost upon us and the wagon for my wives drove up. They came out, bringing the children with them, and were by this time quieted down to some extent. But a fresh howl arose at once when they perceived that I was not going with them—that, on the contrary, I had not the slightest intention of leaving the house. They threw themselves on their knees, seized my robe, and besought me, as the tears streamed down, to rescue myself with them: "Our lord, our protector, don't forsake us, don't cast thyself into the jaws of death!" I explained to them that, if I abandoned my post, our house would become a prey to flames and plundering hands, and my son would lose the chief part of his inheritance, while, on the other hand, there was still a possibility of rescuing it, if we held out bravely, as no one could say whether or not Angulimala would attack in great force.

"Ah, woe! woe!" they cried; "our lord and protector leaves us! And the horrible Angulimala will make away with him, and will wear our lord's thumbs on his necklace! He will torture our husband to death in his fearful fury, and ours will be the fault. Because of our abusive speeches our lord must suffer, and evil, on that account, will it be with us in hell."

I sought to comfort them as well as might be, and when they saw that I was not to be moved from my resolution they were obliged to make the best of it and get into the

wagon. Scarcely, however, had they taken their places, when they began to hurl accusations at one another.

" It was thou who didst begin ! "

" No ! thou !—thou didst call my attention to him as he stood there beside the gate-post. Yes, that thou didst ! —just there thou didst point thy finger at him."

" And thou—thou didst spit at him—red spittle—I had up till that time chewed no betel—I never do that in the morning——"

" But thou didst call him a tramp, a lazy beggar——"

" And thou a bald-pated monk . . ."

And so it went on ; but the creaking of the wheels, as the oxen now began to pull, drowned their voices.

XVII

TO HOMELESSNESS

WHAT a hitherto unknown stillness enveloped me now, O brother, as, after stationing my people, each man at his post, I again entered the house! That I didn't hear the voices of my wives—it wasn't that alone, but that I had heard their voices going out at the gate, away into the distance—that there was no possibility of suddenly hearing out of any corner these scolding voices grow gradually shriller till they finally united or rather became disunited in one discordant brawl-duet—it was that which lent to my house an air of unspeakably salutary quiet, which I could hardly as yet bring myself to believe in.

As I stood there, my palace, surrounded by its beautifully laid-out parks, seemed to me more splendid than ever before, and I trembled at the thought that all this magnificence was to be utterly destroyed within a few hours by the infamous hands of robbers. Fear for my own life troubled me far less than the cruel conviction that these well-cared-for avenues of trees would be laid waste, these artistically hewn marble pillars hurled down, and that all this, the building up of which had cost me so much thought and such tedious effort, whose completion had filled me with so much joy, would be a heap of ruins when the sun rose again. For only too well did I know the traces left by Angulimala.

There was, however, no more for me now to do but wait, and it yet wanted several hours of midnight.

I had for years been living in a ceaseless round of business and pleasure—never a moment had I had in which to come to myself; and as I sat there with nothing to do, alone in a room opening into the pillared hall on the one side and into the garden on the other, in the midst of all the deathlike stillness of the palace, I lived through the first hours, in a sense, since my earliest youth, which entirely belonged to me. My suddenly unfettered thoughts began to focus themselves for the first time on myself. My whole life passed in review before me; and looking upon it as a stranger might have done, I could find no pleasure whatever in the sight.

These reflections I interrupted a couple of times to make a round through house, courtyard, and garden, and so to assure myself that my men were on the watch. As I stepped out for the third or fourth time from between the pillars, my eye, trained on many a caravan journey, at once told me from the position of the stars and constellations that it lacked but half an hour of midnight. I hastily went the rounds again, and exhorted my people to be keenly on the alert. I myself felt the blood hammering in every vein, and my throat seemed to contract from the anxiety and strain. Going back to my room, I sat down as before. But no thoughts would come; I felt a heavy pressure on my breast, and soon it seemed to me as though I should suffocate.

I sprang up and went out between the pillars to inhale the cool night air. As I did so, my cheek was softly fanned by what seemed to be a passing wave of air, and immediately thereafter the hoot of an owl sounded in the stillness. At the same moment a strong odour of the blossoms of the

night lotus was wafted towards me from the garden ponds. I had raised my eyes in order again to calculate the hour from the stars, when lo! I beheld athwart the deep blue expanse of the heavens, between the black tree-tops, the softly glowing radiance of the Milky Way.

"The heavenly Gunga," I murmured involuntarily, and in a moment it was as if the pressure on my breast were loosening, were rising in a warm wave within me, to pour out presently in a stream of hot tears from my eyes. It is true I had, a few hours earlier, when my whole life passed in review before me, thought of Vasitthi and the brief season of my love—but then only as of something distant and strange that seemed to be no more than a foolish dream. Now, however, I no longer *thought* of it all—I lived it again; I was all at once the self of the past and the self of the present, and with genuine horror did I become aware of all the difference. At that time I possessed nothing except myself and my love; and these—were they not inseparable? *Now*—oh what did I not possess now! Wives and children, elephants, horses, cattle, draught oxen, servants and slaves, richly filled warehouses, gold and jewels, a pleasure park and a palace the possession of which my fellow-citizens envied me—but I—where was I? As in some blighted fruit, the kernel was dried up—had disappeared—and everything had turned to empty shell! . . .

Like one awaking, I looked around me.

The extensive and beautifully timbered park lifting its dark tree-tops against the night sky, sown with myriads of stars and threaded by the Milky Way, and the proud hall where the alabaster lamps glowed between the pillars—these suddenly appeared to me in quite a new light. Hostile and threatening, they surrounded me like magnificently glistening vampires which had already drained

almost the whole of my heart's blood and were now gaping greedily for the enjoyment of the last drops, after which there would remain but the withered corpse of an abortive human life.

A distant and undefinable noise—murmurs or footsteps as it seemed to me—caused me to start up. Unsheathing my sword, I sprang down a couple of steps and then stood still to listen. The robbers!—but no! Everything was silent, everything remained silent. Far and wide, nothing moved. It was only one of those unfathomable sounds which belong to the stillness of night, one of those which so often by the watch-fires of the caravans had caused me to spring to my feet. Without, there was nothing! But what was that *within me*? That was no longer terror which made the blood beat in my temples; nor yet was it the courage of despair; no, it was exultant jubilation.

"Welcome, ye robbers! Come hither, Angulimala! Lay waste, reduce to ashes. These are my deadliest enemies whom ye destroy—that which would crush me, ye take away! Here, here to me. Imbrue your swords in my blood. It is my bitterest enemy ye pierce, this body devoted to sensuality, given over to gluttony! It is my saddest possession, this life which ye deprive me of. Welcome robbers! good friends! old comrades!"

It could not be long now; midnight was past, and with what joy did I look forward to the combat! Angulimala would seek me; I wished to see whether he would be able this time also to strike my sword out of my hand. Oh! how sweet that would be, to die, after I had pierced him to the heart—him, to whom alone all my misfortune was due.

"It cannot be long now,"—how often may I have

repeated that comfort to myself, as hour passed hour, that night!

Now—at last! No, it was a rustling of the tree-tops, and died away in the distance, to rise again as before. It sounded as though a great shaggy animal had shaken itself. Again and again it was repeated, and once there sounded the shrill cry of some bird.

Were not these signs of approaching day?

Fear made me cold. Was it possible that I was to be disappointed? Yes, I trembled *now* at the thought that, after all, the robbers might *not* come. How close, within my reach, the end had appeared to be—a short, exciting fight, and then death, scarcely felt. Nothing seemed to me so hopeless now as the wretched prospect of being found here in the morning, in the old surroundings, my old self again, and again bound to the old life. Was that really to happen? Were they not coming, my deliverers? It must assuredly be high time—but I didn't even dare to look. Yet how was that possible? Was I, after all, the victim of some illusion when I recognised Angulimala in that ascetic? Again and again did I ask myself the question, but that I could not believe. And yet if it were he, he would be sure to come—without a purpose, he would certainly not have appeared at my house in his very clever disguise, only to disappear at once again as though the earth had swallowed him. For I had caused inquiries to be made, and knew that he had begged for alms nowhere else.

The drowsy crowing of a young cock in the courtyard near woke me out of my brooding. The constellation that I sought I was scarcely able now to find, several of its stars having already sunk beneath the tree-tops. All the other groups, with the exception of those that stood highest in

the heavens, had lost their clear twinkling. There was no longer room for doubt; the grey dawn was already heralding its coming, and an attack on the part of Angulimala was absolutely out of the question.

But of all the strange things I had this night experienced, the strangest came now.

The recognition of my immunity was not accompanied by any feeling of disappointment, still less, however, of any relief because of the disappearance of all danger. But a new thought had suddenly arisen and possessed me utterly—

"For what do I then really need those robbers?"

I had longed for their torches and pitch garlands to come and free me from the burden of this magnificent property. There are men, however, who, of their own free will, divest themselves of their possessions and lay hold of the pilgrim's staff. As a bird, whithersoever he flies, flies furnished with his wings only, and is with these content, so also is it with the pilgrim who is content with the robe that covers his body, with the bread of charity which prolongs his life. And I have heard them say in praise of that life: "A prison, a slut's corner is domestic life; the free air of heaven is the portion of the pilgrim."

I called upon the swords of the robbers to kill this body. But if this body crumbles into dust, a new one is formed; and out from the old life goes forth a new one as its fruit. What type of life would go forth from mine? It is true, Vasitthi and I solemnly swore by yonder heavenly Gunga whose silver waves feed the lotus ponds of the Western Paradise that we would meet in those Fields of the Blest—and with that vow there was formed, as she said, for each of us there in the crystal waters of the sacred sea,

a life bud—a bud that would grow by every pure thought, every good deed, but at which everything evil and unworthy in our lives would gnaw like a worm. Ah! long since must mine have been gnawed away. I have looked back over my life; it has grown unworthy. Unworthiness would go forth from it. What should I have gained by such an exchange?

But there are, as we know, men who, ere they leave this life, destroy every possibility of re-birth on earth, and who win the steadfast certainty of eternal bliss. And these are the very men who, forsaking everything, adopt the pilgrim's life.

What, then, can the burning torches of the robbers, what their swords, do for me?

And I, who had at first trembled anxiously because of the robbers and had afterwards longed impatiently for them as my one hope—I now neither feared them nor hoped for anything from them. Freed alike from fear and hope, I felt a great calm. In this peace I assuredly experienced a foretaste of the joy which is theirs who have reached the pilgrim's goal; for, as I stood over against the robbers, so those pilgrims surely stand over against all the powers of this world; neither do they fear such, nor do they hope for anything from them, but abide in peace.

And I, who, twenty-four hours earlier, feared to start out on a short journey on account of the hardships and the meagre fare of the caravan life—I now decided without fear or vacillation to journey shelterless and on foot to the end of my days, content to "take things as they come."

Without once going back into the house, I went straight away to a shed lying between the garden and courtyard, where all kinds of tools were kept. There I took an

ox-goad and cut off the tip of it in order to use it as a staff; and a gourd-bottle, such as the gardeners and field-workers carry, I hung over my shoulder.

At the well in the courtyard I filled the gourd.

Upon which, the house-steward approached me.

"Angulimala and his robbers will not come now, O Master! will they?"

"No, Kolita, they will not come now."

"But how, O Master—dost thou go abroad already?"

"Even so, Kolita, I go abroad, and of that very matter I desired to speak with thee. For I go the way now, that men call the way of the noblest birds of passage. From this way, however, Kolita, there is, for one who perseveres in it, no return—no return to this world after death, how much less to this house during life. But the house I give into thy care, for thou hast been faithful unto death. Administer house and fortune until my son attains to manhood. Give my love to my father and my wives, and—farewell!"

After I had thus spoken, and freed my hand from the good Kolita, who covered it with kisses and tears, I walked towards the gate, and at sight of the gate-post, against which the figure of the ascetic had leaned, I thought: "If its likeness to Angulimala was but a vision, then have I read the vision aright!"

Quickly, and without looking back, I went through the suburb with its gardens; and before me there lay, stretched out in the first grey shimmer of the dawn, as if it went on and ever on to all eternity, the desolate far-reaching country road.

Thus, O Reverend One, did I adopt the life of the homeless.

XVIII

IN THE HALL OF THE POTTER

WITH these words, the pilgrim Kamanita brought his narrative to a close, became silent, and gazed meditatively out upon the landscape.

And the Lord Buddha also became silent, and gazed meditatively out upon the landscape.

Lofty trees were to be seen, some near, some farther off, some grouping themselves in shadowy masses, others dissolving airily in cloudlike formations and disappearing into the mists in the distance.

The moon now stood directly over the porch, and its light shone into the outer part of the hall, where it lay like three white sheets upon the bleaching-green, while the left side of the pillars gleamed as though mounted in silver.

In the deep silence of the night one could hear a buffalo cow somewhere in the neighbourhood, cropping the grass with short measured jerks.

And the Master pondered within himself—

"Should I indeed tell this pilgrim all I know of Vasitthi?—how faithful she was to him; how, without fault of her own, she was by base fraud brought to marry Satagira; how it was her doing that Angulimala appeared in Ujjeni; and how, owing to that very visit, he himself, Kamanita, is now treading the path of the pilgrim instead of sinking in foul luxury. Should I reveal to him the path that is Vasitthi's now?"

But he decided that the time was not yet come, and that such knowledge could not be helpful to the pilgrim in his efforts.

The Master, therefore, spoke and said—

"To be separated from what we love is suffering, to be united to what we do not love is suffering. When this was said, it was said of such an experience as thine."

"Oh! how true," called out Kamanita, in an agitated voice, "how profoundly, deeply true! Who, O stranger, uttered those wonderful words?"

"Give thyself no concern about that, pilgrim. It is all the same who uttered them, if thou dost but feel and recognise their truth."

"How should I not? They contain indeed in a few words all my life-trouble. Had I not already chosen a master, I should seek no other than the admirable one with whom these words originated."

"Then thou hast, O pilgrim, a Master, whose teaching thou dost acknowledge, and in whose name thou hast gone forth."

"In truth, O Reverend One, I went forth in the name of no master. On the contrary, my idea at that time was that I should win my way to the goal unaided. And when I rested by day in the neighbourhood of a village, at the foot of a tree, or in the recesses of a forest, then I gave myself up with fervour to the deepest thought. And to such thoughts as these, O Reverend One:—'What is the soul? What is the world? Is the world eternal? Is the soul eternal? Is the world temporal? Is the soul temporal? Is the soul eternal and the world temporal? Is the world eternal and the soul temporal? Or: Why has the highest Brahma caused the world to go forth from

himself? And if the highest Brahma is pure and perfect happiness, how does it happen that the world he has created is imperfect and is afflicted with suffering?'

"And when I gave myself up to such thoughts, I reached no satisfactory solution. On the contrary, new doubts constantly arose, and I did not seem to have neared, by so much as a single step, the goal for whose sake noble-born sons abandon home for ever and voluntarily become homeless."

"Yes, pilgrim, it is as if one were to pursue the horizon: 'O that I might but reach to-day or to-morrow the line that bounds my vision?' In the same way does the goal escape him who gives himself to such questions."

Kamanita nodded thoughtfully, and then went on—

"Then it one day happened, when the shadows of the trees had already begun to lengthen, that I came upon a hermitage in a forest glade, and there I saw young men in white robes, several of whom milked cows, while others split wood and yet others washed pails at the spring. On a mat in front of the hall sat an aged Brahman, from whom these young people evidently learned the songs and sentences. He greeted me with friendliness, and although it would take, as he said, scarcely an hour to reach the next village, he begged me to share their meal and to spend the night with them. I did so gratefully enough, and before I had laid myself down to sleep I had heard many a good and impressive utterance.

"On the following day, when I was about to go on my way, the Brahman addressed me with: 'Who is thy Master, O pilgrim, and in whose name hast thou gone forth?' And I answered, as I have answered thee.

"Upon which the Brahman said: 'How wilt thou, O pilgrim, reach that high goal, if thou dost wander alone

like the rhinoceros, instead of in a herd and led by an experienced leader as is the way of the wise elephant ? '

"At the word 'herd,' he glanced benevolently towards the young people standing round about ; at the word 'leader' he appeared to smile with much inward satisfaction.

"'For,' he went on, 'this is indeed too high and too deep for one's own thought, and without a teacher it must remain a closed book ! On the other hand, the Veda, in the teaching of Çvetaketu, says "just as, O beloved, a man who has been led blindfolded hither from the land of the Gandharer, and then let loose in the desert, will strike too far eastward, or it may be too far to the north, or the south, because he has been led hither with his eyes bound, and with bound eyes let loose ; but will, after one has unbound his eyes and said to him, 'There, in that direction live the Gandharer, go thither,' ask his way from village to village, and reach his home, richer in knowledge and wisdom ; so also is the man who has found a teacher here below, and has in himself the consciousness which he expresses thus :—'I shall have part and lot in this world's turmoil but till my salvation comes, and then I shall go to my place.'"

"I saw, of course, at once, that the Brahman was planning to secure me as a pupil. But this very desire of his destroyed any confidence which might have been awakening within me. On the other hand, I was well pleased with the saying from the Veda, and, as I went on my way, repeated it over and over again to myself, in order to fix it in my memory. In doing so, a sentence occurred to me which I had once heard used regarding a master—

"'The master does not crave disciples, but the disciples, the master.' What a very different man he must be, I thought to myself, from this forest Brahman ! And I

longed, O Reverend One, for the master who was above all such craving."

" Who is this master whom thou didst hear so praised? and what is his name ? "

" It is, O brother, the ascetic Gautama, the Sakya son, who has renounced the heritage of the Sakyas. This Master, Gautama, is greeted everywhere with honour and the joyous cry: 'This is the Sublime, the Holy One, Blameless in Life, and Knower of all Things, Master of Gods and Men, the Enlightened One, the Buddha.' In order to reach that Sublime One, and to acknowledge myself his disciple, I journey now."

" But where, pilgrim, does he now reside—this Sublime, this Enlightened One ? "

" Far to the north, O brother, in the Kingdom of Kosala, lies the town of Sravasti. Just beyond the town is the richly wooded Jetavana park, filled with mighty trees, in whose deep shade, far removed from all noise, human beings are able to sit and meditate. Its crystal ponds ever exhale coolness and its emerald meadows are strewn with myriads of vari-coloured flowers. Years ago, the rich merchant Anatha-Pindika purchased the grove from Prince Jeta—for so much money, that, if spread over the surface of the ground, it would have concealed the whole property—and presented it to the Buddha. There, then, in this delightful Jetavana over whose meadows the feet of so many of the wise have passed, the Master, the Fully Enlightened One, at present makes his abode. And in the course of about four weeks, I hope, if I step bravely out, to have accomplished the distance from here to Sravasti and to sit at the feet of the Master."

" But hast thou, O pilgrim, ever seen him, the Blest One, and wouldst thou, if thou didst see him, recognise him ? "

" No, brother, I have not yet seen him, the Blest One, and if I saw him I should not recognise him."

Then the Master reflected : " For my sake, this pilgrim is now on the way ; he acknowledges himself my disciple ; how would it be if I should unfold my doctrine to him ? " And the Master turned to Kamanita and said—

" The moon has just risen directly over the porch, we are not yet far into the night, and too much sleep is not good for the mind. So then, if it be agreeable to thee, I will, in return for thy narrative, unfold to thee the doctrine of the Buddha."

" It is just what I should wish, O brother, and I pray thee to do so."

" Listen then, O pilgrim, and mark well what I say."

XIX

THE MASTER

AND the Lord Buddha said: "The Perfect One, brother, the Fully Enlightened One, set the wheel of Doctrine rolling at Benares, beside the Rock of the Prophet, in the Grove of the Gazelles. And to it may no man oppose himself, neither ascetic nor priest, neither god nor devil, nor any one whosoever in this world.

That Doctrine is the Unveiling, the Revelation of the four Sacred Truths. What Four? The Sacred Truth of Suffering, The Sacred Truth of the Origin of Suffering, The Sacred Truth of the End of all Suffering, The Sacred Truth of the Path which leads to the End of all Suffering.

But what is, brother, the Sacred Truth of Suffering? Birth is Suffering, Age is Suffering, Sickness is Suffering, Death is Suffering; Care, Misery, Pain, Grief, and Despair are all Suffering; to be separated from the loved is Suffering, to be united to the unloved is Suffering; not to obtain what we desire is Suffering; in short, all the various forms of affection involve Suffering. That is, O brother, the Sacred Truth of Suffering.

But what is, brother, the Sacred Truth of the Origin of Suffering? It is this, the thirst that leads from birth to birth, through many lives, companioned by desire and passion, regaling itself, now here, now there,—it is the thirst for earthly pleasure, the thirst for heavenly rapture,

the thirst for annihilation. That is, O brother, the Sacred Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

But what is, brother, the Sacred Truth of the End of all Suffering? It is the complete, the absolute end of this very thirst, the forsaking it, the detaching, the freeing, the saving oneself from it. That is, O brother, the Sacred Truth of the End of all Suffering.

But what is, brother, the Sacred Truth of the Path which leads to the End of all Suffering? It is the Holy Eightfold Path consisting of Right Perception, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Dealing, Right Life, Right Effort, Right Thought, Right Contemplation. That is, O brother, the Sacred Truth of the Path which leads to the End of all Suffering.

After the Master had in this way set up the four corner-stones, he proceeded to raise the whole doctrinal structure in such a way as to make it a habitable home for the thoughts and feelings of his pupil; he elucidated each separate sentence as one hews and polishes each individual stone, and just as one lays stone upon stone so did he join sentence to sentence, everywhere laying the foundations carefully and fitting each sentence into its own proper place, in its due relation to every other. By the side of the pillar of the Conception of Suffering he placed the pillar of the Conception of the Transitoriness of all things; and as entablature joining the two, while supported by and overarching them, he added the weighty thought of the unreality of all phenomena. Through this mighty portal he ascended, leading his pupil circumspectly, step by step, several times up and down the well-built ladder of the fundamental law of sequence, everywhere establishing and perfecting.

And just as an able builder, when erecting some magnifi-

cent structure, adds pieces of statuary at suitable points and in such a way that they serve not only as ornaments, but also as bearers or supports, so the Master at times introduced a pleasing and ingenious parable, conscious that by such means the veiled meaning of many a profound utterance becomes clear.

Finally, however, he summed the whole up, and at the same time, as it were, covered the building in by placing upon it a resplendent, far-seen dome, in the words: "By attachment to existence, O pilgrim, thou comest into existence; lacking such attachment thou dost not come into existence."

And in the monk, who is nowhere held fast by his affections, there grows amid the unclouded cheerfulness of inward peace this perception—"that now is his salvation sure, that this is the last birth of all, that there will be no new existence beyond."

The monk who has come thus far is rewarded with this highest wisdom. And this, O pilgrim, is the highest, holiest wisdom—"to know that all suffering is ended." He who has found it has found a freedom which stands true and inviolable. For that is false, O pilgrim, which is vain and fleeting; and that is true which is real and permanent, the end of all delusion.

And he who from the very beginning was subject to birth, to the changes of age, and to death, has now, marking well the balefulness of this law of Nature, won for himself the safety that knows no birth, no age, no death. He who was subject to sickness, to impurity, to sin, has now reached the assurance that knows no change, that is pure and holy—

"I am saved and my salvation is within me; my life is ended, my work done, this world exists for me no longer."

Such a one, O pilgrim, is called the "Finisher" because he has finished and made an end of all suffering.

Such a one, O pilgrim, is called the "Obliterator" because he has obliterated the delusion of "I" and "Mine."

Such a one, O pilgrim, is called the "Weeder" because he has weeded out the plant of life by the roots so that no life can ever germinate again.

Such a one, so long as he is in the body, is seen of gods and men; but when his body is dissolved in death, he is no longer seen of gods and men. Nor does Nature—the All-seeing—see him any longer; he has blinded the eye of Nature, escaped from the Evil One. Crossing the stream of being, he has reached the island, the only one, that lies beyond age and death—Nirvana.

XX

THE UNREASONABLE CHILD

After the Lord Buddha had ended his discourse, the pilgrim Kamanita remained sitting for a long time, silent and motionless, a prey to conflicting and sceptical thoughts. Finally he said: "Thou hast told me much of how the monk should in his lifetime make an end of suffering, but nothing whatever of what becomes of him when his body sinks in death and returns to its elements, except that from that time on neither men nor gods, nor even Nature herself sees him again. But of an eternal life of supreme happiness and heavenly bliss—of that I have heard nothing. Has the Master revealed nothing concerning it?"

"Even so, my brother, it is even so. The Master has revealed nothing concerning it."

"That is as much as to say that the Lord Buddha knows no more of this most important of all questions than I myself," replied Kamanita discontentedly.

"Dost thou think it to be so? Listen then, pilgrim. In that Sinsapa wood in the neighbourhood of Kosambi, where ye did swear—thou and thy Vasitthi—eternal fidelity and pledged yourselves to meet again in the Paradise of the West, the Lord Buddha at one time took up his abode. And the Lord Buddha came out of the wood, a bundle of Sinsapa leaves in his hand, and said to his disciples: "What think ye, O ye disciples, which are more numerous, these Sinsapa leaves which I have

taken in my hand, or the other leaves yonder in the wood? And without taking much time to consider, they answered: "The leaves, Lord, which thou hast taken in thy hand are few, and far more numerous are the leaves yonder in the Sinsapa wood." "Even so also, O ye disciples," said the Master, "is that which I have discerned and not declared to you, greater in sum than that which I have declared. And why, O ye disciples, have I not declared everything? Because it is not salutary, is not in keeping with the ancient spirit of asceticism, and does not lead to the turning away from all earthly things, not to conversion from earthly lust, not to the final dissolution of all that is subject to change, not to perfect knowledge, not to Nirvana."

"If the Master spoke thus in the Sinsapa grove at Kosambi," answered Kamanita, "then the matter is probably even more serious still. For in that case, he has certainly been silent on the point in order not to discourage. or, as might well happen, even terrify his disciples; as he certainly would, if he should reveal to them the final truth—namely, annihilation. This seems to me to result as a necessary consequence from what thou hast so plainly stated. For, after all the objects of the five senses and of thought have been denied and rejected as fleeting, as without any real existence, and as full of suffering, there remain as a matter of fact no powers by means of which we could grasp anything whatsoever. So I understand, O Reverend One, from the doctrine thou hast just expounded to me, that a monk who has freed himself from all impurity falls a victim to annihilation when his body dies, that he vanishes, and has no existence beyond death."

"Didst thou not say to me, pilgrim," then asked the Lord Buddha, "that thou wouldst sit within a month at

the feet of the Master in the Grove of Jetavana near Sravasti ?"

"I assuredly hope to do so, O Reverend One ; why dost thou ask me ?"

"Then, when thou dost sit at the feet of the Master, what dost thou think, my friend—is the physical form which thou wilt then see, which thou wilt be able to touch with thy hand—is that the Perfect One, dost thou look upon it as such ?"

"I do not, O Reverend One."

"Perhaps, then, when the Master speaks to thee . . . the mind that then reveals itself, with its sensations, perceptions, ideas, is the Perfect One—dost thou so look upon it ?"

"I do not, O Reverend One."

"Then it may be, my friend, that the body and the mind taken together are the Perfect One."

"I do not look upon them in that light, O Reverend One."

"Dost thou think, then, that the Perfect One exists apart from his body or from his mind, or mayhap from both ? Is that thy view, my friend ?"

"He is in so far apart from them, that his being is not fully comprehended in these elements."

"What elements or powers hast thou then, my friend, apart from those of the body with all its qualities of which we have become aware through the senses, and apart from those of the mind with all its sensations, perceptions, and ideas—what powers hast thou beyond these, by means of which thou canst fully apprehend what thou hast not yet apprehended in the being of the Perfect One ?"

"Such further powers, O Reverend One, I must acknowledge I do not possess——"

"Then even here, friend Kamanita, in the world of sense, the Perfect One is not, in truth, and in his very essence, to be apprehended by thee. Hast thou, then, a right to say that the Perfect One—or the monk who has freed himself from all impurity—is doomed to annihilation when his life ends, that he does not exist beyond death; and solely because thou art in possession of no powers by which thou canst, in truth, and in his very essence, apprehend him there?"

Questioned in such fashion, Kamanita sat for some time speechless, his body bent, his head bowed.

"Even if I have no right to make that assertion," he said finally, "it yet seems to me to be implied plainly enough in the silence of the Perfect One. For he certainly would not have maintained such a silence if he had had anything joyous to communicate, which would of course be the case if he knew that for the monk who had conquered suffering there remained after death not only not annihilation, but eternal and blessed life. Certain it is that such a communication could only serve as a spur to his disciples and be a help to them in all true effort."

"Dost thou think so, my friend? But how if the Perfect One had not pointed to the end of all suffering as the final goal—even as he also began with suffering in the beginning—but had set himself to extol an eternal and blessed life out beyond it and beyond this life of ours. Many of his disciples would assuredly have been delighted with the idea, would have clung to it eagerly, would have longed for its fulfilment with the passionate longing which disturbs all cheerfulness and serenity of thought; but would they not also have been involved unperceived in the meshes of the powerful net of Life's desire? And while clinging to a beyond for

which of necessity they had to borrow all the colouring from this life, would they not, the more they pursued that Beyond, have but clung the more to the Present?

"Like the watch-dog that, bound to a post and trying to free himself, rushes in a circle round the post—even so those worthy disciples, out of sheer hatred for this life, would have rushed in an endless circle around it."

"Though I am certainly compelled to acknowledge this danger," was Kamanita's answer, "I yet hold that the other danger, the uncertainty evoked by silence, is by much the more dangerous, inasmuch as it cripples the energies from the very beginning. For how can the disciple be expected to exert himself with all his might, with decision, and courage, to overcome all suffering, if he doesn't know what is to follow, whether eternal bliss or non-existence?"

"My friend, what wouldst thou think in such a case as this? Let us say that a house is burning, and that the servant runs to waken his master: 'Get up, sir! Fly! the house is on fire. Already the rafters are burning and the roof is about to fall in!' Would the master be likely to answer, 'Go, my good fellow, and see whether there is rain and storm without, or whether it is a fine moonlit night. In the latter case we will betake ourselves outside?'"

"But how, O Reverend One, could the master give such an answer? For the servant had called to him in terror: 'Fly, sir! The house is on fire. Already the rafters are burning and the roof threatens to fall in.'"

"Of course the servant had called to him. But if, in spite of that, the master answered: 'Go, my good fellow, and see whether there is rain and storm without

or whether it is a fine moonlit night. In the latter case we will betake ourselves outside,' wouldst thou not conclude from it that the master had not heard aright what his faithful servant had said—that the mortal danger which hung over his head had by no means become clear to him?"

"I should certainly have been forced to that conclusion, O Reverend One, as it would otherwise be unthinkable that the man could give such a foolish answer."

"Even so, pilgrim—therefore go thou also forth as if thy head were encompassed by flames, for thy house is on fire. And what house? The world! And set on fire by what flame? By the flame of desire, by the flame of hate, by the flame of delusion. The whole world is being consumed by flame, the whole world is enveloped in smoke, the whole world rocks to its foundations.

Addressed thus, the pilgrim Kamanita trembled as does a young buffalo when he hears for the first time the roar of the lion in the neighbouring thicket. With bent body, head sunk on his breast, his face suffused with burning colour, he sat for some time without uttering a word.

Then, in a gruff although somewhat tremulous voice, he made answer—

"It in no way pleases me, however, that the Master has revealed nothing concerning this matter, that is, if he was able to give any information which would have been full of promise—and even if he has been silent because what he knew was comfortless and terrifying, or because he knew absolutely nothing, I am no better pleased. For the thoughts and the efforts of human beings are directed towards happiness and pleasure, a tendency which has its foundation in Nature herself and cannot be otherwise.

And in keeping with this is the following which I have heard from the lips of Brahman priests :—

"Let us suppose the case of a youth, capable, eager for knowledge, the quickest, strongest, most powerful of all youths, and that to him should belong the world with all its treasures. That would be a human joy. But a hundred human joys are but as one joy of the heavenly genii; and a hundred joys of the heavenly genii are but as one joy of the gods; and a hundred joys of the gods are but as one joy of the Indra; and a hundred joys of the Indra are but as one joy of the Prajapati; and a hundred joys of the Prajapati are but as one joy of the Brahman. This is the supreme joy, this is the path to the supreme joy."

"Yes, O pilgrim, just as if there stood there an inexperienced child, incapable of sensible reasoning. This child feels in his tooth a burning, boring, stabbing pain, and runs to an eminent and learned physician and pours out his troubles to him. 'I beg thee, honoured sir, to give me by thy skill, a feeling of blissful rapture in place of this pain at present in my tooth.' And the physician answers, 'My dear child, the sole aim of my skill is the removal of pain.' But the spoilt child begins to wail, 'Oh! I have so long endured a burning, stabbing, boring pain in my tooth; is it then not most reasonable that I should now enjoy in its stead a feeling of rapture, of delicious pleasure? And there do exist, as I have heard, learned and experienced physicians whose skill goes so far, and I believed that thou wert one of these.' And then this foolish child runs to a quack, a miracle-worker from the land of the Gandharer, a 'cheap Jack,' who causes the following announcement to be made by a town-crier to the accompaniment of drums and conches: 'Health is the greatest of all gifts, health is

the goal of all men. Blooming, luxuriant health, a comfortable and blissful feeling in all one's members, in every vein and fibre of the body, such as the gods enjoy, even the sickliest can obtain by my help, at a very small-cost.' To this miracle-worker the child runs and pours out his trouble: 'I beg thee, honoured sir, to give me by thy skill in place of this pain at present in my tooth, a feeling of comfort, of blissful rapture.'

"And the magician answers: 'My dear child, in doing just this very thing lies my skill.' After he has pocketed the money offered by the child, he touches the tooth with his finger and produces a magical effect, by means of which feeling of blissful pleasure drives out the pain. And the foolish child runs home overjoyed and supremely happy.

"After a short time, however, the feeling of pleasure gradually subsides and the pain returns. And why? *Because the cause of the evil was not removed.*

"But, O pilgrim, let us suppose that a reasonable man feels a burning, stabbing, boring pain in his tooth. And he goes to a learned and experienced physician and tells him of his trouble: 'I beg thee, honoured sir, by thy skill to free me from this pain.' And the physician answers: 'If thou, my friend, dost demand no more from me, I may safely trust my skill so far.' 'What could I ask for more,' replies the reasonable man. And the physician examines the tooth and finds the cause of the pain in an inflammation at its root. 'Go home, my friend, and have a leech put on this spot. When the leech has sucked itself full and falls off, then lay these herbs on the wound. By so doing, the matter and the impure blood will be removed and the pain will cease.' The reasonable man goes home and does as the physician bids him. And the pain goes

and does not return. And why not? *Because the cause of the evil has been removed.*"

Now when the Master, after ending his parable, ceased speaking, Kamanita sat, reduced to silence and sorely disturbed, his body bent, his head sunk on his breast, his countenance suffused with colour, without a word, while the anguished sweat dropped from his forehead and trickled down from his armpits. For did he not feel himself compared by this venerable teacher to a foolish child and made equal with one? And as he was unable in spite of his utmost efforts to find an answer, he was near to weeping.

Finally, when able to command his voice, he asked in a subdued tone: "Hast thou, Reverend Sir, all this from the mouth of the Master, of the perfect Buddha himself?"

It happens seldom that the perfect smile. But at this question a smile did play around the Master's lips.

"No, brother, I cannot say I have."

When the pilgrim Kamanita heard this answer, he joyfully raised his bent body and, with glistening eye and reanimated voice, burst forth—

"Wasn't I sure of it! Oh, I knew for certain that this couldn't be the very doctrine of the Master himself, but rather thine own tortuous interpretation of it—an interpretation based altogether on misunderstanding. Is it not said that the doctrine of the Buddha is bliss in the beginning, bliss in the middle, and bliss in the end? But how could one say that of a doctrine which does not promise eternal and blessed life, full of supremest joy? However, in a few weeks I shall sit at the feet of the Master and receive the doctrine of salvation from his own lips, as a child draws sweet nourishment from its mother's breast. And thou also wilt be there, and, truly taught, wilt alter thy mistaken and destructive conception. But, look, those strips of moonlight

have gone back almost to the threshold of the hall ; it must be far into the night. Come, then, let us lay ourselves down to sleep ? " " As thou wilt, brother," answered the Master kindly. And drawing his mantle more closely around him, he laid himself down on his mat in the posture of the lion, supporting himself on his right arm, his left foot resting on the right.

And having in mind the hour of awakening, he instantly fell asleep.

XXI

IN MID CAREER

WHEN the Master awoke in the grey dawn, he saw the pilgrim Kamanita busy, rolling up his mat, hanging his gourd over his shoulder, and looking round for his staff which he hadn't at once been able to perceive in the corner in which he had placed it, owing to its having fallen down. While thus engaged, there was, in his every movement, the appearance of a man in a great hurry.

The Master sat up and gave him friendly greeting.

"Art thou going already, brother?"

"Surely, surely," called out Kamanita, full of excitement, "just think, it is hardly to be believed—absolutely laughable and yet so marvellous—such rare good fortune! A few minutes ago I awoke and felt my throat quite parched after all the talk of yesterday. Without more ado, I jumped up and ran to the well just across the way, beneath the tamarinds. A maiden was standing there drawing water. And what dost thou suppose I learned from her? The Master isn't in Sravasti at all. But canst thou imagine, then, where he is? Yesterday, accompanied by three hundred monks, he arrived here in Rajagriha! And at this moment he is in his mango grove on the farther side of the town. In an hour, in less, perhaps, I shall have seen him—I, who believed that I should have to journey other four weeks! What do I say—in an hour? It is only a good half-hour thither, the maiden said, if one

doesn't go through the chief streets, but runs through the lanes and squares to the west gate. . . . I can scarcely realise it. The ground burns beneath my feet—farewell, brother! Thou hast meant well by me, and I shall not fail to conduct thee also to the Master—but now I really cannot delay a moment longer."

And the pilgrim Kamanita dashed out of the hall and ran away along the street as fast as his legs would carry him. But when he reached the city gate of Rajagriha it was not yet opened and he was obliged to wait for a short time—time which seemed to him an eternity. and raised his impatience to the highest pitch.

He employed the minutes, however, in getting from an old woman carrying a basket of vegetables to the town, and who, like himself, was obliged to halt at the gate, exact information with regard to the shortest way—as to how he was to go through such and such a lane, past a little temple to the right, and to the left past a well, and then not to lose sight of a certain tower, so that he might perhaps recover in the town the time he had lost standing outside its walls.

As soon, then, as the gate was opened he dashed recklessly away in the direction indicated. Sometimes he knocked down a few children, anon he brushed with such violence past a woman who was rinsing dishes at the kerbstone that one of these rolled rattling away from her and broke, or he bumped into some water-carrier. But the abuse which followed him fell on deaf ears, so utterly was he possessed by the one thought that soon, so wonderfully soon, he should see the Buddha.

"What rare fortune!" he said to himself. "How many generations pass and have no Buddha sojourn on the earth in their time; and of the generation that has a

Buddha for its contemporary, oh, how few ever behold him. But this happiness will certainly be mine now. I have always feared that on the long and dangerous road wild beasts or robbers might deprive me of this joy, but now it cannot be taken from me."

Filled with such thoughts, he turned into a very narrow little lane. In his foolish onward rush he failed to observe that from the other end of it, a cow, mad with fear from some cause or other, was dashing towards him, and failed also to notice that while several people in front of him fled into a house, others concealed themselves behind a projecting bit of wall; nor did he hear the shout with which a woman standing on a balcony tried to warn him—but dashed on, with his eyes fixed on the pinnacled tower, which was to prevent his taking some wrong turning.

Only when it was too late to get out of the way did he see with horror the steaming nostrils, the bloodshot eyes, and the polished horn which, the next instant, drove deep into his side.

With a loud scream he fell down by the wall. The cow dashed onward and disappeared into another street.

People instantly hurried up, in part from curiosity, in part to help. The woman who had warned him, brought water with which to cleanse the wound. They tore up his cloak to make a bandage, and, if possible, to staunch the blood which gushed forth as from a fountain.

Kamanita had hardly lost consciousness for an instant. It was clear to him at once that this meant death. But neither that knowledge nor the agonies he was enduring were such torture to him as the fear that he might not now see the Buddha. In a deeply agitated tone of voice he besought the bystanders to carry him to the Mango Grove —to the Buddha.

"I have journeyed so far, dear friends. I was so near my goal. Oh, have pity upon me, don't delay to carry me thither. Don't think of the pain to me, have no fear that I shall sink under it—I shall not die till ye have laid me down at the feet of the Perfect One; then I shall die happy, and happy rise again."

Some of them ran to fetch poles and a mattress. A woman brought a strengthening draught of which Kamanita took a few spoonfuls. The men were divided as to which way was the shortest to the Hall of the Brotherhood in the Mango Grove, for every step would make a difference. It was clear to all that the pilgrim's life was ebbing fast.

"There come disciples of the Perfect One," cried a bystander, pointing along the little lane; "they will be best able to tell us."

And, as a fact, several monks of the Order of the Buddha were approaching, clad in yellow cloaks which left the right arm and hand—the hand with the alms bowl in it—free. Most of them were young men, but at their head walked two venerable figures—a grey-haired man whose earnest, if somewhat severe, face, with its piercing eye and powerful chin, involuntarily attracted attention to itself, and a middle-aged man whose features were illumined by such a heart-winning gentleness that he had almost the appearance of a youth. Yet an experienced observer might, in his bearing and somewhat animated movements, as also in his flashing glances, have detected the inalienable characteristics of the warrior caste, while the deliberate calm of the older man no less revealed the born Brahman. In loftiness of stature and princely carriage they were, however, alike.

When these monks halted by the group which had collected round the wounded man, many voluble tongues at once related to them what had happened, and

informed them that they were just about to carry the wounded pilgrim on a stretcher—which was then being fetched—to the Mango Grove, to the Buddha, in order to fulfil the man's overwhelming desire; could one of the younger monks perhaps return with them to show them the shortest way to the spot where the Master was at that moment to be found?

"The Master," answered the old man with the severe face, "is not in the Mango Grove, and we ourselves don't know where he is."

At the answer a despairing groan burst from Kamanita's wounded breast.

"But he certainly cannot be far from here," added the younger. "The Master sent the company of monks on ahead yesterday and pursued his journey alone. He arrived late, I expect, and sought quarters somewhere, probably in the suburbs. We are now on the way to look for him."

"Oh, seek diligently, find him," cried Kamanita.

"Even if we knew where the Master is, it would not be possible to carry this wounded man thither," said the stern monk. "For the shaking of the stretcher would soon render his condition so much worse that, even if he survived it, he would arrive in a dying condition, with a mind incapable of apprehending the words of the Master. Let him, however, take care of himself now, be treated by an experienced surgeon, and carefully tended, and there is always the hope that he may so far recover strength as to be able to listen to the Master's words.

Kamanita, however, pointed impatiently to the stretcher—

"No time—dying—take me with you—see him—touch—die happy—with you—hurry——!"

Shrugging his shoulders the monk turned to the younger brethren—

" This poor man holds the Supremely Perfect One to be an image, at whose touch one's sins are forgiven."

" He has gained faith in the Perfect One, Sariputta, even if he lacks the deeper understanding," said the other, and bent over the wounded man to ascertain what strength he still had; " perhaps we might risk it after all. I am sorry for the poor fellow, and I believe we could do nothing better for him than make the attempt."

A grateful look from the pilgrim rewarded him for his advocacy.

" As thou wilt, Ananda," answered Sariputta kindly.

At this moment there came striding past, from the direction in which Kamanita had also come, a potter who carried on his head a basket with all kinds of potter's wares. When he perceived the pilgrim Kamanita, whom they had just laid with great care, though not without causing him violent pain, upon the stretcher, he stopped, stricken with horror, and so suddenly that the dishes, piled one above another, came crashing down and were broken to pieces.

" God in heaven ! what has happened here ? That is the pious pilgrim who honoured my hall by spending the night there, in the company of a monk who wore a robe like that of these reverend men."

" Was that monk an aged man and of lofty stature ? " asked Sariputta.

" He was, reverend sir—and he seemed to me to be not unlike thyself."

Then the monks knew that they did not need to seek longer—that the Master was in the house of the potter. For " the disciple who resembles the Master," was the description by which Sariputta was generally known.

" Is it possible ? " said Ananda, glancing up from the

wounded man, who, owing to the pain occasioned by his being lifted, had become all but unconscious, and had not noticed the arrival of the potter. "Is it possible that this poor man should have had the happiness for which he so longs, the whole night through, without in the least suspecting it?"

"That is the way of fools," said Sariputta. "But let us go. Now he can, of course, be brought along."

"One moment," called Ananda, "he has been overcome by the pain."

Indeed Kamanita's blank stare showed that he scarcely noticed what was passing around him. It began to grow dark before his eyes, but the long strip of morning sky, which showed between the high walls, nevertheless pierced to his consciousness, and may well have appeared to him like the Milky Way crossing the midnight sky. His lips moved.

"The Gunga," he murmured.

"His mind wanders," said Ananda.

Those standing next to Kamanita, who had heard what he said, interpreted it differently.

"He now wishes to be taken to the Gunga in order that the sacred waters may wash away his sins. But Mother Gunga is far from here—who could possibly carry him thither?"

"First to the Buddha, then the Gunga," murmured Sariputta, with the half-contemptuous pity the wise man bestows on the fool who, beyond the reach of help, falls out of one superstition into another.

Suddenly, however, Kamanita's eyes became wonderfully animated, a happy smile transfigured his face; he sought to raise himself. Ananda supported him.

"The heavenly Gunga," he whispered, with weak but happy voice, and pointed with his right hand to the strip

of sky above his head "The heavenly Gunga! We swore —by its waves—Vasitthi——"

His body quivered, blood gushed from his mouth, and he passed away in Ananda's arms.

Scarcely half an hour later Sariputta and Ananda, accompanied by the monks, entered the potter's hall, greeted the Master respectfully, and sat down by his side.

"Well, my dear Sariputta," asked the Master, after having given them a friendly greeting, "did the company of young monks under thy leadership reach the end of their long journey well and without accident? Didst thou have any lack of food. or medicine for the sick, by the way? And are the disciples happy and studious?"

"I am glad to be able to say, my reverend Master, that we lacked for nothing, and that the young monks, full of confidence and zeal, have but one desire, namely, to see the Master face to face. These noble youths, who know the word and profess the doctrine, I have brought with me, in order to present them without delay to the Master."

At these words three young monks arose and greeted the Master with folded hands—

"Hail, Master, the Perfect Buddha—hail!"

"Ye are welcome," said the Master, and invited them by a movement of his hand to be seated again.

"And didst thou, O Master, arrive after yesterday's journey without over-fatigue or other evil effects? And hast thou spent a passable night in this hall?"

"Even so, my Brother. I arrived at dusk, very tired it is true, but without other ill effects from my journey, and spent a fairly good night in the company of a stranger pilgrim."

"That pilgrim," began Sariputta, "has been robbed of his life in the streets of Rajagriha by a cow."

"And never dreaming with whom he had passed the night here," added Ananda, "his one desire was to be brought to the feet of the Master."

"Soon afterwards, to be sure, he demanded that he should be carried to the Gunga," remarked Sariputta.

"Not so, Brother Sariputta," Ananda corrected him; "for he spoke of the *heavenly* Gunga. With radiant countenance he recalled a vow, and, in doing so, uttered the name of a woman—Vasitthi, I believe—and so he died."

"The name of some woman on his lips he went hence," said Sariputta. "Where may he have entered again into existence?"

"Foolish, ye disciples, was the pilgrim Kamanita, as an unreasonable child. To this pilgrim, ye disciples, who went about in my name and wished to profess himself a follower of the doctrine of the Master, I expounded the doctrine fully, entering into every detail. And he took offence at the doctrine. The longings and aspirations of his heart were centred on bliss and heavenly joys. The pilgrim Kamanita, ye disciples, has entered again into existence in Sukhavati, in the Paradise of the West, there to enjoy the pleasures of heaven for thousands upon thousands of years."

XXII

IN THE PARADISE OF THE WEST

At the time when the Master uttered these words in the hall of the potter at Rajagriha, the pilgrim Kamanita awoke in the Paradise of the West.

Wrapped in a red mantle, whose rich drapings flowed down about him, delicate and glistening as the petals of a flower, he found himself sitting with crossed legs on a huge, similarly coloured lotus rose which floated in the middle of a large pond. On the wide expanse of water such lotus flowers were to be seen everywhere, red, blue, and white, some as yet mere buds, others, although fairly developed, yet still closed; but, at the same time, countless numbers were open like his own, and on almost every one a human form was throned, whose richly draped robes seemed to grow up out of the petals of the flower.

On the sloping banks of the pond, in the greenest of grass, there laughed such a wealth of flowers as made it seem that all the jewels of earth had taken the form of flowers, and had been reborn here. Their luminous play of colour they had retained, but the hard coat of mail they had worn during their earthly existence they had exchanged for the soft and clinging, the living vesture of the plants. In keeping with this change, was the fragrance they exhaled, which was more powerful than the most splendid essence ever enclosed in crystal, while yet

possessing the whole heartsome freshness of the natural odour of flowers.

From this enchanting bank the ravished glance swept away between masses of splendid trees, some loftily piercing the sky, others with broader summit and deeper shade, many clad in emerald foliage, numbers resplendent with jewelled blossoms, standing now singly, now in groups, anon forming deep, forest glades, on to where craggy heights of the most alluring description displayed their graces of crystal, marble, and alabaster, here naked, there covered with dense shrubbery or veiled in airy drapery of flowers. But at one spot groves and rocks disappeared entirely to make room for a beautiful river, which poured its waters silently into the lake like a stream of starry light.

Over the whole region the sky formed an arch, the deep blue of which grew deeper as it neared the horizon, and under this dome hung white, massy cloudlets on which reclined lovely genii, who drew from their instruments the magic strains of rapturous melodies that filled the whole of space.

But in that sky there was no sun to be seen, and, indeed, there was no need for any sun. For from the cloudlets and the genii, from the rocks and flowers, from the waters, and from the lotus roses, from the garments of the Blest, and, in even greater degree, from their faces, a marvellous light shone forth. And just as this light was of radiant clearness—without, however, dazzling in the least—so the soft, perfume-laden warmth was freshened by the constant breath of the waters, and the inhaling of this air alone was a pleasure which nothing on earth could equal.

When Kamanita had so far grown accustomed to the sight of all these splendours that they no longer overpowered him, but began to seem like his natural surround-

ings, he directed his attention to those other beings who, like himself, sat round about on floating lotus thrones. He soon perceived that those clad in red were male, those in white of the female sex, while of the figures wrapped in blue cloaks some, as it appeared to him, belonged to the one, some to the other, sex. But all, without exception, were in the fullest bloom of youth, and seemed to be of a most friendly disposition.

A neighbour in a blue cloak inspired him with particular confidence, so that the desire to begin a conversation awoke in his breast.

"I wonder whether it is permissible to question this blest one?" he thought. "I would so much like to know where I am."

To his great astonishment the reply came at once, without a sound, and without even the faintest movement of the blue-clad figure's lips.

"Thou art in Sukhavati, the abode of bliss."

Unconsciously Kamanita went on with his unspoken questioning.

"Thou wast here, most sacred one, when I opened my eyes, for my glance fell at once on thee. Didst thou awake at the same time as I, or hast thou been long here?"

"I have been here from time immemorial," answered the neighbour in blue, "and I would believe that I had been here from all eternity, if I hadn't so often seen a lotus rose open and a new being appear—and but for the perfume of the Coral Tree."

"What is there about that particular perfume?"

"That thou wilt soon discover for thyself. The Coral Tree is the greatest wonder of this Paradise."

The music of the heavenly genii, which seemed quite naturally to accompany this soundless conversation,

adapting itself with its melodies and strains to every succeeding sentence, as if to deepen its meaning and to make clear what the words could not convey, wove, at these words, a strangely mystical sound-picture, and it appeared to the listening Kamanita as if in his mind endless depths revealed themselves, in whose shadows dim memories stirred without being able to awake.

"The greatest wonder?" said he, after a pause. "I imagined that of all wonderful things here the most wonderful was that splendid stream which empties itself into our lake."

"The heavenly Gunga," nodded the blue.

"The heavenly Gunga," repeated Kamanita dreamily, and again there came over him, only in added degree, that feeling of something which he ought to know, and yet was not able to know, while the mysterious music seemed to seek, in the deepest depths of his own personality, for the sources of that stream.

XXIII

THE ROUNDELAY OF THE BLEST

WITH a gasp of astonishment Kamanita now noticed that a white figure, throned not far from him on her lotus flower, suddenly seemed to grow upward. The mantle, with its piled-up mass of folds and corners, unrolled itself till it flowed down in straight lines from the shoulders to the golden border. And even this now no longer touched the petals of the flower—the figure swept untrammelled away over the pond, up the bank, and disappeared between the trees and shrubbery.

"How glorious that must be," thought Kamanita. "But that is, I imagine, a very difficult accomplishment, although it looks as if it were nothing. I wonder whether I shall ever be able to learn it."

"Thou art able now, if thou dost but desire it," answered his neighbour in blue to whom the last question was addressed.

Instantly Kamanita had the feeling that something was lifting his body upward. He was already floating away across the pond towards the bank, and soon he was in the midst of the greenery. Whithersoever his glance was directed, thither did he wend his flight as soon as the wish was formed, and quickly or slowly as he desired. He now saw other lotus ponds equally splendid with the one he had just left. He wandered on through charming groves where birds in bright colours sprang from branch to branch,

their melodious song blending with the soft rustling of the tree-tops. He floated over flower-strewn valleys where graceful antelopes disported themselves without fearing him in the least, and finally let himself down on the gentle slope of a hill. Between the trunks of trees and flowering shrubs he saw the corner of a pond where the water sparkled round large lotus blossoms, several of whose flower-thrones bore blissful figures, while several others, even of the perfectly opened ones, were empty.

It was plainly a moment of general enjoyment. As on a warm summer evening the fire-flies circle hither and thither under the trees and round about the shrubbery, in noiseless, luminous movement, so here these blest forms swayed singly and in pairs, in large groups or chains, through the groves and around the rocks. At the same time it was possible to see from their glances and gestures that they were conversing animatedly with one another, and one divined the invisible threads of the discourse which was being carried on between the noiseless passers-by.

In a state of sweet and dreamy shyness, Kamanita enjoyed this charming spectacle till, gradually, there grew up in him a desire to converse with these happy ones.

Immediately he was surrounded by a whole company who greeted him kindly as the newly-arrived, the just-awakened one.

Kamanita wondered much, and inquired how it was that the news of his coming had already been spread abroad all over Sukhavati.

"Oh! when a lotus opens itself, all the other lotus flowers in the ponds of Paradise are moved, and every being is conscious that another has somewhere among us awakened to bliss."

" But how could ye know that just I happened to be the newcomer ? "

The figures floating around him smiled charmingly.

" Thou are not yet fully awake. Thou dost look at us as though thou sawest dream-figures and wert afraid that they might suddenly disappear, and that rude reality might again surround thee."

Kamanita shook his head.

" I don't quite understand. What are dream-figures ? "

" Ye forget," said one white-robed figure, " that he has assuredly not yet been to the Coral Tree."

" No, I have not yet been there. But I have already heard of it. My neighbour in the pond mentioned it ; the tree is said to be such a wondrous one. What is there about it ? "

But they all smiled mysteriously, looking at one another, and shaking their heads.

" I would like so much to go there at once. Will no one show me the way ? "

" Thou wilt find the way thyself when the time has come."

Kamanita drew his hand over his forehead.

" There is yet another wonderful thing here of which he spoke. . . . Yes, the heavenly Gunga . . . by it our pond is fed. Is that so with yours also ? "

The white-robed figure pointed to the clear little river that wound round about the foot of the hill and so, by easy turnings, onward to the pond.

" That is our source of supply. Countless such arteries intersect these fields, and that which thou hast seen is a similar one even if somewhat larger. But the heavenly Gunga itself surrounds the whole of Sukhavati "

" Hast thou seen it also ? "

The white-robed one shook her head.

"Is it not possible to go there, then?"

"Oh, it is possible," they all answered, "but no one of us has been there. Besides, why should we go? It cannot be more beautiful anywhere than here. Several of the others, to be sure, have been there, but they have never flown thither again."

"Why not?"

His white-robed visitor pointed towards the pond—

"Dost thou see the red figure there, almost at the other bank? He was there once, though it is long, long ago. Shall we ask him whether he has flown again since then to the shores of the Gunga?"

"Never again," at once came the answer from him of the red robe.

"And why not?"

"Fly thither thyself and bring back the answer."

"Shall we? Together with thee I may venture to do it."

"I should like to go—but not now."

Forth from a neighbouring grove there floated a train of happy figures, wound a chain about the meadow shrubbery, and, while they extended the chain, the figure at the end, a light blue one, seized the hand of the white robe. She stretched out her other hand invitingly to Kamanita.

He thanked her smilingly, but gently shook his head.

"I would prefer to be a spectator still."

"Yes, better rest and awake. For the present, farewell." And gently led away by the light blue, she floated thence in the airy roundelay.

The others also, with a kind and cheerful greeting, moved away, that he might have quiet in which to collect himself.

XXIV

THE CORAL TREE

KAMÂNITA followed them long with his eyes and wandered. And then he wondered at his wonder.

"How does it happen that everything here seems so strange to me? If I belong to this place, why does not everything appear perfectly natural? But every new thing I see is a puzzle and fills me with astonishment. For example, this odour that now floats past me so suddenly? How absolutely different it is from all other flower scents here—much fuller and more powerful, attracting and disquieting at the same time. Where can it come from? But where do I myself come from? It seems to me as though I had been, but a short time ago, a mere nothing. Or did I have an existence? Only not here? If so, where? And how have I come here?"

While he revolved these questions in his mind his body had risen up, without his perceiving it, from the meadow, and he was already floating onward—though not in a direction taken by any of the others. He made his way upwards towards a depression in the crest of the hill. As he passed over it he was greeted by a yet more powerful breath of that new and strange perfume.

Kamanita, however, flew onward.

Beyond the hill the neighbourhood lost something of its charm. The show of flowers was scantier, the shrubbery darker, the groves more dense, the rocks more forbidding

and higher. Herds of gazelles grazed there, but only in a few solitary instances was one of the Blest to be seen.

The valley became narrower and ended in a cleft, and here the perfume grew yet stronger. Ever more rapid became his flight, ever more naked, steeper, and higher did the rocky walls close around him till an opening was no longer to be seen.

Then the ravine made a couple of sharp turns and opened suddenly.

Round about Kamanita extended a deep, pit-like valley shut in by towering malachite rocks which seemed to reach the heavens. In the midst of the valley stood the wonder-tree. Trunk and branches were of smooth, red coral, slightly more yellow the red of the crisp foliage, amid which blossoms of a deep crimson glowed and burned.

Over the pinnacles of the rocks and the summit of the tree rose the deep blue sky in which not a single cloud was to be seen Nor did the music of the genii penetrate in any appreciable degree to this spot—what still trembled in the air seemed to be but a memory of melodies heard in the long past.

There were but three colours to be seen in the valley; the ultramarine blue of the heavens, the malachite green of the rocks, the coral red of the tree. And only one perfume—that mysterious odour, so unlike all others, of the crimson flowers which had led Kamanita thither.

Almost immediately the wonderful nature of that perfume began to show itself.

As Kamanita inhaled it here, in the dense form in which it filled the whole basin, his consciousness became suddenly quickened. It overflowed and broke through the barriers

which had been raised about him from the time of his awakening in the pond till the present.

His past life lay open before him.

He saw the hall of the potter where he had sat in conversation with that foolish Buddhistic monk; he saw the little lane in Rajagriha through which he had hurried and the cow tearing towards him—then the horrified faces round about and the yellow-clad monks. And he saw the forests and the country roads of his pilgrimage, his palace, and his two wives, the courtesans of Ujjeni, the robbers, the grove of Krishna, and the Terrace of the Sorrowless with Vasitthi, his father's house, and the children's room.

And behind that he saw another life, and yet another, and still another, and ever others, as one sees the line of trees on a country road till the trees become points and the points blend into one strip of shadow.

At this, his brain began to reel.

And at once he found himself in the cleft again like a leaf that is driven by the wind. For, the first time, no one can bear the perfume of the Coral Tree for long, and the instinct of self-preservation bears every one thence at the first sign of dizziness.

As he, by and by, moved more quietly through the open valley, Kamanita pondered: "Now I understand why the white robe said she imagined I had not yet been to the Coral Tree. For I certainly could not imagine then what they meant by 'dream-pictures'; but now I know, for in that other life I have seen such. And I also know now why I am here. I wanted to visit the Buddha in the Mango Grove beside Rajagriha. Of course that intention was frustrated by my sudden and violent death, but my good intentions have been looked on favour-

ably, and so I have reached this place of bliss as though I had sat at his feet and had died in his blessed doctrine. So my pilgrimage has not been in vain."

Very soon Kamanita reached the pond again, where he let himself down upon his red lotus flower like a bird that returns to its nest.

XXV

THE BUD OF THE LOTUS OPENS

It suddenly seemed to Kamanita as though something living were moving in the depths of the pond. In the crystal deeps he became dimly aware of a rising shadow. The waters bubbled and seethed, and a large lotus bud, with red apex, shot like a fish above the surface on which it then lay swimming and rocking. The waters themselves rose and sank in ever-extending rings, and, for a long time afterwards, trembled and glittered, shivered, as it seemed, into fragments and radiating light, as if the pond were filled with liquid diamonds, while the reflection of the watery coruscations flickered up like miniature flames over the lotus leaves, the robes, and the faces and forms of the Blest.

Kamanita's own being trembled, and radiated all its hidden colours, and over his heart also there seemed to dance, as if in happy play, a reflection of joyous emotion.

"What may that have been?" his glance asked of his blue neighbour.

"Deep down, among far-distant worlds on the gloomy earth, a human soul has this instant centred its heart's desire upon entering again into existence here in Sukhavati. Now let us also see whether the bud will develop well, and finally blossom. For many a soul fixes its desire on this pure home of bliss and is not able to live

up to its longing, but, on the contrary, entangles itself again in a maze of unholy passions, succumbs to the lust of the flesh, and remains bound to the impurities of earth. Then the bud pines away and at last disappears entirely. This time, as thou seest, it is a man's soul. Such a one, in the checkered life of earth, fails more easily from the path to Paradise, for which reason thou wilt also notice that even if the red and white are about equal in number, among the blue the lighter in colour, the females, are by far the more numerous."

At this communication the heart of Kamanita quivered strangely as if, all at once, joy blent with pain and sorrow, bearing a promise of future happiness, had set it vibrating, and his gaze rested, as though seeking the solution to some riddle, upon a closed lotus flower which, white as the breast of a swan, rocked gracefully quite near to him in the still gently moving water.

"Canst thou remember seeing the bud of my lotus rise from the depths?" he asked of his experienced neighbour.

"Surely, for it came up together with that white flower thou art now gazing upon. And I have always watched the pair, at times not without anxiety. For fairly soon thy bud began perceptibly to shrivel up, and it had almost sunk beneath the surface of the water when all at once it raised itself again, became fuller and brighter, and then developed magnificently till it opened. The white, however, grew slowly, but gradually and evenly towards the day when it should open—when suddenly it was attacked as if by some sickness. It recovered, however, very quickly, and became the magnificent flower thou now seest before thee."

At these words there arose in Kamanita such a feeling

of joy that it really seemed to him as if he had hitherto been but a sad guest in a sad place—to such a degree did everything now appear to glow, to smell sweet, and to breathe music.

And as though his gaze, which had rested unwaveringly on the white lotus, had been a magician's wand for the raising of hidden treasures, the apex of the flower began to move, the petals bent their edges outward, drooping gracefully down on every side, and lo!—in their midst sat Vasitthi, with widely-opened eyes, whose sweetly smiling glance met his own.

Simultaneously Kamanita and Vasitthi stretched out their arms to one another, and hand in hand they floated away over the pond towards the bank.

Kamanita observed, of course, that Vasitthi had not as yet recognised him, but had only turned to him unconsciously as the sunflower to the sun. How should she have recognised him—seeing that no one, immediately on awaking, remembered anything of his previous life—even if, at sight of him, in the depths of her heart, dim presentiments might stir, as had happened in his own case when his neighbour spoke of the heavenly Gunga?

He showed her the gleaming river, which emptied itself noiselessly into the pond—

"In like fashion do the silver waters of the heavenly Gunga feed all the lakes in the fields of the Blest."

"The heavenly Gunga," she repeated questioningly, and drew her hand across her forehead.

"Come, let us go to the Coral Tree."

"But the grove and the shrubbery are so beautiful over there, and they are playing such delightful games," said Vasitthi, pointing in another direction.

"Later! First let us go to the Coral Tree in order that thou mayst be vivified by its wonderful perfume."

Like a child one has comforted by the promise of a new toy, for not having been allowed to take part in the joyous games of its comrades, Vasitthi followed him willingly. As the perfume began to float towards them her features grew more and more animated.

"Whither dost thou lead me?" she asked, as they turned into the narrow gorge among the rocks. "Never have I been so filled with expectation. And it seems to me that I have often in the past been filled with expectation, although thy smile reminds me that I have but just awakened to consciousness. But thou hast surely mistaken the way, we can go no farther in this direction."

"Oh, we can go farther, much farther," smiled Kamanita, "and perhaps thou wilt now become aware that that feeling of which thou hast spoken has not deceived thee, dearest Vasitthi."

Even as he spoke there opened before them the basin of the valley amid the malachite rocks, with the red Coral Tree and the deep blue sky. Then the perfume of all perfumes enveloped her.

Vasitthi laid her hands on her breast as if to check her all too deep breathing, and in the rapid play of light and shadow on her features, Kamanita discerned how the storm of life-memories was sweeping over her.

Suddenly she raised her arms and flung herself on his breast—

"Kamanita, my beloved!"

And he bore her thence, speeding back through the gorge with eager haste.

In the open, if still somewhat sombre, valley with its dark shrubbery and thickset groves, where the gazelles were at play but no human form disturbed the solitude, he descended with her, finding shelter under a tree.

"Oh, my poor Kamanita," said Vasitthi, "what must thou have suffered! And what thought of me when thou didst learn that I had married Satagira!"

Then Kamanita told her how he had not learned that from hearsay but had himself, in the chief street of Kosambi, seen the bridal procession, and how the speechless misery graven on her face had directly convinced him that she had only yielded to the pressure of her parents.

"But no power on earth would have compelled me, my only love, if I had not been forced to believe myself in possession of sure proof that thou wert no longer alive."

And Vasitthi began to tell him of the events of that bygone time.

XXVI

THE CHAIN WITH THE TIGER-EYE

WHEN thou, my friend, wert gone from Kosambi, I dragged myself miserably through the days and nights, as a girl does who is devoured by a fever of longing, and is at the same time a prey to a thousand fears on behalf of her beloved. I did not even know whether thou didst still breathe the air of this world with me, for I had often heard of the dangers of such journeys. And now I was constrained to reproach myself most bitterly, because, with my foolish obstinacy, I was to blame for thy not having made the return journey in perfect safety under the protection of the embassy. Yet, with all this, I was not able really to repent of my thoughtlessness, because I owed to it all those precious memories which were now my whole treasure.

Even Medini's cheering and comforting words were seldom able to dissipate for any length of time the cloud of melancholy which hung over me. My best and truest friend was the asoka under which we stood on that glorious moonlit night, the tree thou, my sweetheart, hast assuredly not forgotten, and to which I addressed on that occasion the words of Damayanti. Countless times did I try to obtain, by listening to the rustling of its leaves, an answer to my anxious questions, to see in the falling of a leaf or the play of light and shadow on the ground an omen of some kind. If then it happened that the sign given by such a

self-invented oracle bore a favourable interpretation, I was able to feel happy for a whole day or even longer, and to look hopefully into the future. But just for that very reason my longing increased, and with the longing my fears returned as naturally as evil dreams result from a fevered temperature.

In this condition it was almost a benefit that, after a short time, my love was not permitted to live in lonely inactivity dedicated to suffering alone, but that it was forced into a combative attitude and obliged to gather up all its strength even if it did thereby bring me to the verge of a complete estrangement from my own people.

It was in this way. Satagira, the son of the minister, pursued me ever more assiduously now with tokens of his love, and I could no longer show myself in a public pleasure-garden with my companions without his being there and making me the object of his obtrusive attentions. That I didn't respond to these in the least but, on the contrary, showed him, even more plainly than was polite, how hateful they were to me, had not the slightest deterrent effect upon him. Soon, however, my parents began, first with all kinds of hints, then with less and less reserve, to plead his cause, and when he finally came forward to press his suit openly, they demanded that I should give him my hand. I assured them, with bitter tears, that I could never love Satagira. That, however, made little impression upon them. But just as little was I affected by their representations, their prayers, and their reproaches, and remained insensible alike to the pleading of my mother and the threats of my father.

Driven to bay, I finally told them straight out that I had promised myself to thee—of whom they had already heard from Satagira—and that no power on earth could

force me to break my word, which had been sacredly given to thee, or to belong to another. And I added that, if the worst should come to the worst, I would kill myself by persistently refusing all nourishment.

As my parents now saw that I was quite capable of carrying out this threat, they finally, although much put out and very angry, gave the matter up, and Satagira also now seemed to yield to his fate, and to be taking pains to comfort himself for his defeat in the courts of love, by becoming the hero of victorious deeds on a sterner field of battle.

About this time report had many horrible tales to tell of the robber Angulimala who, with his band, had laid waste whole districts, burnt villages, and made the roads so unsafe that at last almost no one ventured to travel to Kosambi. I became a prey, as a consequence, to horrible fears, for I naturally dreaded that thou mightst at last be coming to me and be unfortunate enough to fall into his robber hands by the way. Things stood thus when it became suddenly known that Satagira had received the supreme command of a large body of troops with which to sweep the whole neighbourhood of Kosambi, and, if possible, capture Angulimala himself, as well as the other chief leaders of the band. He had, so the story ran, sworn to accomplish this or to fall fighting in the attempt.

Little as I was otherwise disposed to feel kindly towards the son of the minister, I could not this time refrain from wishing him the best of success, and, when he moved out, my earnest wishes for his prosperity followed his colours.

About a week later I was in the garden with Medini, when we heard loud cries from the street. Medini rushed thither at once to learn what had happened, and presently

announced that Satagira was returning in triumph to the city, having either cut down the robbers or taken them prisoner; and that the horrible Angulimala himself had fallen into his hands alive. She invited me to go out with her and Somadatta to the street, to witness the entry of the soldiers with the captive robbers, but I did not wish Satagira to have the satisfaction of seeing me among the spectators of his triumph. So I stayed behind alone, more than happy at the thought that the roads were now again open to my beloved. For so little do mortals understand of the workings of fate that they sometimes, as I did then, greet as a specially fortunate day just that one on which the current of their lives takes a turn for the worse.

On the following morning my father entered my room. He handed me a crystal chain with a tiger-eye as amulet, and asked me if I, by any possibility, recognised it.

I felt as though I should drop, but I summoned up all my strength and answered that the chain resembled one which thou hadst always worn round thy neck.

" It isn't like it," said my father, with brutal calmness, " it is it. When Angulimala was made prisoner he was wearing the chain, and Satagira at once recognised it. For, as he related to me, he had once wrestled with Kamanita in the park for your ball, and, in the course of the struggle, had seized Kamanita's chain in order to hold the latter back. The chain parted and remained in Satagira's hands, so that he was able to examine it minutely. He was convinced that he couldn't be deceived. And then Angulimala, closely questioned, confessed that in the region of the Vedisa, he had, two years ago, attacked Kamanita's caravan on its return journey to Ujjeni, had cut down his people, and had taken Kamanita, with a

servant, prisoner. The servant he sent to Ujjeni for ransom. As this, for some reason, was not forthcoming, he had, according to robber usage, put Kamanita to death.

At these frightful words I should certainly have lost consciousness, had not a possibility presented itself to my despairing mind of hoping against hope.

"Satagira is a base and a crafty fellow," I answered, with apparent calm, "who would stop at no fraud; and he has set his heart, or rather his pride, upon gaining me for his wife. If he, at the time you speak of, examined the chain so attentively, what was to hinder him from having one made like it? I imagine that this idea occurred to him when he first heard of Angulimala. If he had not taken Angulimala himself prisoner, he could always say that the chain had been found in possession of the robbers, and that they had confessed to having killed Kamanita."

"That is hardly possible, my daughter," said my father, shaking his head, "and for a reason which thou, it is true, canst not see, but which I, as a goldsmith, can fortunately reveal to thee. If thou wilt examine the small gold links which connect the crystals with one another, thou wilt notice that the metal is redder than that of our jewellery here, because we use in our alloys more silver than copper. The workmanship also is of the somewhat coarser type seen in the mountain districts."

On my lips there hung the reply that so clever a goldsmith as himself would, no doubt, succeed as perfectly in the matter of the proper mixture of the gold as in turning out the characteristic workmanship; for I saw every one and everything conspiring against our love,

and did not trust even my nearest relatives. However, I ended the matter by saying that I would in no wise suffer myself to be convinced by this chain that my Kamanita was not still alive.

My father then left me in great anger, and I was able in solitude to give myself wholly up to my despair.

XXVII

THE RITE OF TRUTH (*SACCAKIRIYA*)

At that time I always spent the first hours of the night on the Terrace of the Sorrowless, either alone or with Medini. On the evening of the day of which I have just spoken, I was there by myself, and, in the state of mind in which I then was, the solitude was most agreeable. The full moon shone as on those memorable nights of the past, and I stood before the great asoka with its wealth of blossoms, to beg from it, from the "heartsease," a comforting omen for my troubled heart. After some time I said to myself, "If, between me and the trunk, a saffron-yellow flower should fall before I have counted a hundred, then is my beloved Kamanita yet alive."

When I had counted to fifty, a flower fell, but an orange-coloured one. When I reached eighty I began to count more and more slowly. Just then a creaking door opened in the corner between the terrace and the wall of the house, where a stair led down into the courtyard—a flight of steps really intended only for workmen and gardeners.

My father came forward, and behind him Satagira. A couple of soldiers armed to the teeth followed, and after them came a man who towered a full head above the others. Finally, yet other soldiers brought up the rear of this strange, not to say inexplicable, procession.

Two of the latter remained to guard the door, while all the others came directly towards me. At the same time I noticed that the giant in their midst walked with great difficulty, and that at every step he took there resounded a dismal clanking and rattling.

That very instant a saffron-yellow leaf floated down and remained lying just at my feet. I had, however, from sheer astonishment, ceased counting, and, as a consequence, could not be sure whether it had fallen before or after the hundred was reached.

The group now advanced from the shadow of the wall into the moonlight, and then I saw with horror that the giant figure was loaded with chains. His hands were fettered at his back, about his ankles clanked heavy iron rings which were linked to either end of a huge rod, and were connected by double chains of iron with a similar ring about his neck. To it, in turn, two other chains were fastened, and these were held by two of the soldiers. As is usual in the case of a prisoner who is being conducted to the scaffold, there hung around his neck and on his hairy breast, a wreath of the red Kanavera blossom; and the reddish-yellow brickdust, with which his head was powdered, caused the hair hanging down over his forehead, and the beard which reached almost to his eyes, to appear yet more ferocious. From this mask his eyes flashed out at me, and then fell, wandering furtively hither and thither on the floor like those of an evil beast.

As to who stood before me I should not have needed to inquire, even if the Kanavera blossoms had concealed the symbol of his terrible name—the necklace of human thumbs.[1]

[1] Angulimala = wreath of fingers.

"Now, Angulimala," Satagira broke the silence, "repeat in the presence of this noble maiden what thou hast confessed on the rack regarding the murder of the young merchant Kamanita of Ujjeni."

"Kamanita was not murdered," answered the robber gruffly, "but taken prisoner and made away with, according to our customs."

And he now related to me in a few words what my father had already told me of the matter.

I stood, meanwhile, with my back to the asoka tree, and supported myself by clutching the trunk with both hands, burying my finger-nails convulsively in the bark in order to keep myself from falling. When Angulimala had finished speaking, everything seemed to be going round in a whirl. But even yet I did not give up.

"Thou art an infamous robber and murderer," I said. "What value can thy word have for me? Why shouldst thou not say what he commands thee, into whose power thy villainies have brought thee?"

And, as if by an inspiration which astonished even myself, and caused a glimmer of hope to flash up within me, I added—

"Thou dost not dare to look me even once in the eyes—thou, the terror of all human beings—me, a weak girl! Thou dost not dare—because at the instigation of this man thou art telling a cowardly lie."

Angulimala did not look up, but he laughed harshly, and answered in a voice that sounded like the growling of a fettered beast of prey—

"What good end would be served by looking thee in the eyes? I leave that to young dandies. The eyes of an 'infamous robber' thou wouldst believe as little

as his words. And his oath would, I suppose, signify just as little."

He came a step nearer.

"Well then, maiden, be witness now to the 'Rite of Truth.'"

Once again the lightning of his glance struck me as it swept upward and fixed itself upon the moon in such a way that, in the midst of the tangle of his discoloured hair and beard, only the whites of his eyes were still visible. His breast heaved, so that the red flowers moved as in a dance, and, with a voice like that of thunder rolling among the clouds, he called aloud—

"Thou who dost tame the tiger, snake-crowned goddess of night! Thou who dost dance by moonlight on the pinnacles of the mountains, jangling thy necklace of skulls, gnashing thy teeth, swinging thy blood-basin! Kali! Mistress of the robbers! Thou who hast led me through a thousand dangers, hear me! Truly as I have never withheld a sacrifice from thee; truly as I have ever loyally observed thy laws; truly as I did deal with this Kamanita according to our statute—the statute which commands us 'Senders' when the ransom does not arrive by the appointed hour, to saw the prisoner through the middle and cast his remains on the public road—just as truly do thou stand by me now in my direst need, rend my chains, and free me from the hands of mine enemies."

As he said this he made a mighty effort—the chains rattled, arms and legs were free, the two soldiers who held him lay prone with the earth, a third he struck down with the piece of chain which hung at his wrist, and, before any one of us clearly understood what was happening,

Angulimala had swung himself over the breastwork. With a fierce shout Satagira gave chase.

That was the last I saw and heard.

Afterwards I learned that Angulimala had fallen, had broken a foot, and had been captured by the guard; that he had later died in prison, under torture, and that his head had been placed over the east gate of the town where Medini and Somadatta had seen it.

With Angulimala's "Rite of Truth" my last doubt and my last hope had left me. For I knew well that even that devilish goddess Kali could have worked no miracle to rescue him if he had not had the strength which truth lends on his side.

As to what should now become of me I troubled myself little, for, on earth, everything was henceforth lost to me. Only in the Paradise of the West could we meet again. Thou hadst gone before and I would, as I ardently hoped, soon follow. There happiness blossomed, all else was a matter of indifference.

As Satagira now continued to press his suit, and my mother, always wailing and weeping, kept on making representations to me that she would die of a broken heart if she should suffer through me the disgrace of having a daughter remain unmarried in the house of her parents—she "might just as well have given birth to the ugliest maiden in Kosambi!"—little by little my resistance weakened.

Over and above, I had no longer so much to bring against Satagira as before. I could not avoid recognising the steadfastness and fidelity of his attachment, and I also felt that I owed him gratitude for having avenged the death of my beloved.

Thus, then, I became—after almost another year had passed—Satagira's bride.

XXVIII

ON THE SHORES OF THE HEAVENLY GUNGA

When Kamanita perceived that even here, in the abode of bliss, these memories overshadowed, as with dark and troublous wings, the yet delicate, newly awakened soul of his beloved, he took her by the hand and led her away, guiding their flight to the charming hill on whose slope he had lately lain and watched the games of the floating dancers.

Here they sought a resting-place. Already groves and shrubberies, meadows and hill-slopes were filled with countless floating figures, red, blue, and white. Group after group surrounded them to greet the newly awakened one. And the two mingled in the ranks of the players.

They had been gliding hither and thither for a long time, through the groves, round about the rocks, over the meadows and lotus ponds, wherever the chain of dancers led, when they were suddenly met by the white-robed companion who had formerly called upon Kamanita to face the journey to the Gunga with her. As they held out their hands to one another in the dance, she asked, with a sunny smile—

" Well, hast thou been at the shores of the Gunga yet ? Now thou hast a companion, I see."

" Not yet," answered Kamanita.

" What is that ? " asked Vasitthi.

And Kamanita told her.

"Let us go there," said Vasitthi. "Oh, how often have I, down in the sad valleys of earth, looked up to the distant reflection of the heavenly stream, and thought of the blessed plains that are enfolded and watered by it, and asked myself if we should really one day be united in this place of bliss. Now I feel myself irresistibly drawn thither, to linger with thee on its shores."

They withdrew from the chain of dancers and turned their flight in a direction which led them far from their own lake. After some time they saw no more lotus ponds, nor lotus roses bearing happy beings; the wealth of blossoms decreased perceptibly; more and more rarely did they meet the figures of the Blest; herds of antelopes here gave life to the plain; on the lakes swans glided along, drawing trains of glistening waves behind them over the dark waters. The hills, which in the beginning had grown ever steeper and more rocky, disappeared entirely.

They floated over a flat, desert-like plain covered with tiger-grass and thorny shrubs. Before them lay stretched the endless curves of a forest of palms.

They reached the forest. More and more deeply did the shadows close around them. The ringed trunks gleamed like bronze. High above them, the tree-tops resounded with a clang as of metal.

In front, glistening points and streaks of light began to dance. And suddenly there streamed towards them such a blaze of light that they were obliged to hold their hands before their eyes. It seemed as though there stood in the forest a gigantic colonnade of burnished silver pillars flashing back the light of the rising sun.

When they ventured again to remove their hands from their faces, they were just floating out between the last of the forest palms.

Before them lay the heavenly Gunga, its silvery expanse reaching out to the far horizon, while at their feet wavelets of liquid starlight lapped, as if with tongues of flame, the pearl-grey sand of the flat shore.

As a rule, the sky begins to grow gradually clearer down towards the horizon, but here the order was reversed; the ultramarine blue passed into indigo, and finally deepened to an all but absolutely black border, which rested on the silver waters.

Of the perfume of the blossoms of Paradise, there was nothing left. But whereas, in the malachite valley, that memory-laden perfume of perfumes lay dense around the Coral Tree, here there blew, along the stream of the universe, a cool and fresh breath which took for its perfume the absence of all perfume—perfect purity. And Vasitthi seemed to quaff it greedily as a refreshing draught, while it took Kamanita's breath away.

Here also, of the music of the genii, one did not catch the faintest note. But from the stream there seemed to rise up mighty sounds like the deep booming of thunder.

"Listen," whispered Vasitthi, and raised her hand.

"Strange," said Kamanita. "Once on my journeyings I had found quarters in a hut which stood at the entrance to a mountain ravine, and past the hut there flowed a charming little rivulet with clear water in which I washed my feet after my wanderings. During the night, a violent rain fell and, as I lay awake in my hut, I heard the rivulet, which in the evening had rippled softly by, rush and rage with ever-increasing vehemence. At the same time my attention was caught by a banging, thundering sound which I could not explain to myself at all. The next morning, however, I saw that the clear brook had become a raging mountain torrent, with waters grey and foaming,

in which huge stones rolled and bounded as they dashed onward. And these it was that had caused the uproar. How dost thou suppose that just here, when listening to these sounds, this memory out of the time of my pilgrimage should rise within me ? "

" It comes from this," answered Vasitthi, " that the sounds are analogous, though in that mountain stream merely stones, while here in the stream of the heavenly Gunga, worlds are rolled and propelled along. These it is from which the booming sounds like thunder proceed."

" Worlds ! " exclaimed Kamanita, horrified.

Vasitthi smiled, and, as she did so, floated onward ; but Kamanita, full of terror, caught and held her back by the robe.

" Take care of thyself, Vasitthi. Who knows what powers, what fearful forces hold sway over this stream of the universe, forces into whose power thou mightst fall, by forsaking the shore. I tremble already at the thought of seeing thee torn suddenly from me."

" Wouldst thou not dare to follow me, then ? "

" Certainly, I would follow thee. But who knows whether I could reach thee, whether we should not be torn from one another ? And even if we remained together, what misery would it not be to be borne away to the illimitable, far from this abode of bliss."

" To the illimitable ! " repeated Vasitthi dreamily, and her glance swept over the surface of the heavenly Gunga, far out to where the silver flood touched the black border of the sky, and seemed to desire to penetrate ever farther. " Is it possible, then, for eternal happiness to exist where there is limitation ? " she asked, as if she were lost in thought.

" Vasitthi ! " exclaimed Kamanita, becoming alarmed

in earnest. "I wish I had never led thee hither! Come, love, come!"

And even more anxiously than from the Coral Tree did he draw her thence.

She followed him not unwillingly, turning her head at the first palms as she did so, and casting a last glance backward at the heavenly stream.

. . . .

And again they were throned on their lotus seats in the crystal pond, again they floated between trees bearing blossoms of jewels, again mingled with the ranks of the Blest, joined in the dances, and enjoyed the raptures of heaven, happy in their unclouded love.

Once, in the dance, they met their friend of the white robe, who greeted them with—

"So ye have really been at the shores of the Gunga?"

"How canst thou possibly know that we have been there?"

"I see it; for all who have been there wear, as it were, a shadow on their brows. For that reason I don't wish to go. And ye will also not go a second time—no one does."

XXIX

AMID THE SWEETS OF THE CORAL BLOSSOMS

As a matter of fact, they did not again visit the inhospitable shores of the heavenly Gunga. Often, however, they turned their flight toward the valley of the malachite rocks. Reposing under the mighty crown of the Coral Tree, they breathed that perfume of perfumes which streamed from the crimson blossoms, and, in the depths of their memory, there was opened up to them the vista of their former lives—life preceding life in some strangely appointed order, back into the far-distant past.

Sometimes in palaces, sometimes in huts, they saw themselves again, but whether robed in silk and muslin, or clad in the coarse fabrics of the village loom, the mutual love was ever there. At one time, it was crowned with the happiness of their union, at another, separation due to life's destiny, or to death, was their sad lot, but, happy or unhappy, the love remained the same.

And they saw themselves in other times, when human beings were mightier than now, in those eternally unforgettable heroic days, when he tore himself from her arms and bestrode his war elephant, in order to march to the City of Elephants, to the aid of his friends, the Pandaver princes, in their quarrel with the Kauravas ; when, fighting at the side of Arjuna and Krishna, on the plain of Kurukshetra, on the tenth day of the gigantic battle he yielded up his heroic soul. But she, when she received the news of his death,

ascended, in front of the palace, and followed by all of her women, the funeral pyre, which she lit with her own hand.

. . . .

And yet again they saw themselves, in strange regions, and amid natural scenery of another type.

It was no longer the valley of the Gunga and Jumna, with its magnificent palace-filled cities where warriors in shining armour, proud Brahmans, rich citizens, and diligent Çudras lent animation to the streets. This theatre which, with its luxuriant tropical magnificence, had so often girt round their common life, as though there were no other world, now disappeared entirely, to make room for a drearier and harsher land.

Here the sun of summer burns, it is true, just as hot as by the Gunga, dries up the water-courses, and parches the grass. But in winter the frost robs the woods of their foliage and rime covers the fields. No towns rear their towers in this region; only widely scattered villages, with large folds, lie in the midst of its rich pastures, and the protecting elevation near by is turned into a small fortress by means of ramparts and rude walls. A warlike, pastoral people have here their home. The woods are full of wolves, and miles away the trembling wayfarer hears the roar of the lion—"of the beast that roameth, frightful, savage; whose lair is in the mountains"—as *he* describes him; for he is a song-maker.

After long wanderings, he approaches a village, an unknown but welcome guest; for that he is everywhere. Over his shoulder hangs his sole visible possession—a small lute; but in his head he carries the whole precious heritage of his fathers: ancient mystic hymns to Agni and Indra, to Varuna and Mitra, yea, even to unknown gods; songs of war and wassail for men; love-songs for the maidens;

fortune-bringing magic sayings for the kine, the givers of milk. And he has power and knowledge with which to increase this store from his own resources. Where, indeed, would such a guest not be welcome?

It is the hour when the cattle are being driven home. At the head of a herd, there walks, with supreme grace in every movement of her young body, a maiden of lofty stature; by her side goes her pet cow, whose bell the others follow, and from time to time the favourite licks her mistress's hand. The young wanderer gives the maiden evening greeting; she replies with kindly words. Smiling, they look at one another—and the look is the same that in the pleasure park at Kosambi flew back and forth between the ball-player on the stage and the stranger spectator.

. . . .

But the Land of the Five Streams, after it has repeatedly given them shelter and a home, disappears in its turn as did the valley of the Gunga. Other regions come into view, other peoples and customs surround them—everything poorer, ruder, wilder.

The steppe over which the procession passes—horsemen, wagons, and pedestrians in endless lines—is white with snow. The air is full of whirling flakes. Black mountains look darkly down. From under the tentlike roof of a heavy ox-wagon, a maiden leans forward with such haste of movement that the sheepskin slips aside, and her wealth of golden hair flows down over cheeks, throat, and breast. Anxiety burns in her eyes as she gazes out in the direction in which all eyes are turned, all fingers point—to where, like a dark cloud whirled up by the wind, a horde of mounted horsemen comes sweeping towards them. But she smiles confidently, as her glance meets that of the youth who

rides on a black ox beside the wagon; and it is the same look as erstwhile, even if out of blue eyes. The glance sets the heart of the youth on fire—he swings his battle-axe, and with loud cry joins the other warriors who rush to meet the foe—sets it on fire, and still warms it when it is pierced by the cold iron of a Scythian dart.

. . . .

But they saw greater changes yet; led by the fragrant odour of the Coral Tree, they undertook even longer journeys.

They found themselves as stag and hind in the vast forest. Their love was wordless now, but not sightless. And again it was the same look; deep in the darkest depths of their great presageful eyes there lightened, even if through dim blue mists, the same spark that had later found its way so radiantly from human eye to human eye.

They grazed together; waded side by side in the clear, cool forest brook; body by body rested in the tall soft grass. They had their joys in common; together trembled for fear, when a branch suddenly became alive and the jaws of the python opened wide, or when, in the stillness of the night, a scarcely audible, creeping movement was caught by their quick ears, while their distended nostrils winded the pungent odour of a beast of prey, and they fled thence, with mighty bounds, just as a rustling and cracking made itself heard in the neighbouring thicket, and the angry roar of a tiger that had fallen short of its prey rolled through the wood, now suddenly waking to life all around.

For many years they had thus together shared all the delights and dangers of the forest, when in a lovely bit of shade one day they proceeded to gnaw the

young and juicy saplings. Alas! the hind entangled herself in the snare of a hunter. In vain did her mate work with tine and hoof to burst the bonds that fettered his love, though he laboured ceaselessly till the enemy—man—approached. Then he faced the foe with lowered antlers, and the deadly spear soon ended the lives of both.

. . . .

Farther yet, and a pair of golden eagles were building their eyrie high up in savage mountain fastnesses, hanging over the blue abysses of the Himalayas, and circling round its snowy pinnacles.

As two dolphins they ploughed the boundless expanse of old ocean's salty flood.

Yes, once they even grew as two palms on an island in the midst of the seas, their roots intertwined in the cool sand of the shore, and their tops rustling together in the cool sea-breeze.

Thus did they two, companions in so many wanderings, linger in the shade of the Coral Tree, and, day by day, enjoy the sweets of memory exhaled by its fragrant blossoms.

For, even as a royal couple, in pursuit of amusement and knowledge, have many things related to them by the court story-teller—now the life-story of a king, again a simple village tale—at one time, an heroic poem; at another, a legend of ancient days or, it may be, a fable of some animal, or a fairy tale—and all the while know that, however often it pleases them to listen, there is no fear that this prince of story-tellers will ever be at a loss for matter, because the treasury of his legendary knowledge and his own inventive ability are both inexhaustible—so these two were able to say to themselves: " However often and however long we may linger here, ay, even if it were for an eternity, there is no danger that these blossoms will ever

be unable to wake further memories ; for the farther we go down into the abysses of time, the farther does time recede from us."

And they marvelled much.

" We are as old as the world," said Vasitthi.

XXX

"TO BE BORN IS TO DIE"

"ASSUREDLY we are as old as the world," said Kamanita. "But up to this time we have wandered on, never resting, and death when he has come has always projected us into a new life. Now, however, we have reached a place where there is no more passing away, where eternal joy is our lot."

At the time when he spoke thus, they were just returning from the Coral Tree to their pond. He was about to let himself down on his lotus flower when it suddenly struck him that its red colour seemed to have lost something of its freshness and gloss. Yes, as he now remained floating over it in the air and looked attentively down, he saw with dismay that the petals of the corona had become brown at the edges, as if they were burnt, and that their tips were losing vitality and curling up.

Vasitthi's white lotus did not look any better; she also had remained floating over hers, evidently arrested by the same phenomenon.

He turned his eyes upon his blue neighbour whose lotus showed just the same change, and Kamanita noticed that neither did his face beam as joyously as on that day when he, Kamanita, first greeted him; his features were not so animated as formerly, his bearing not so open. Yes, even in his countenance, Kamanita read the same dismay that had moved himself and Vasitthi.

And it was the same, as a matter of fact, everywhere

he looked. A change had come over both flowers and figures.

Again he directed a searching glance upon his own lotus. One of the petals in the corona seemed to become alive—slowly it bent itself forward and fell loose upon the surface of the water.

But it did not fall alone.

At the same instant a crown petal was loosened from every lotus flower—the whole expanse of water glittered and trembled, and, as it rose and fell, gently rocked the dainty, coloured fleet on its bosom. Through the groves on the bank went a breath of frost; and a shower of blossoms, like sparkling jewels, fell to the ground.

A sigh was wrung from every breast, and a low bu cutting disharmony traversed the music of the heavenly genii.

"Vasitthi, my love!" exclaimed Kamanita, seizing her hand in deep agitation, "dost thou see? Dost thou hear? What is this? What can it mean?"

Vasitthi, however, looked at him, calmly smiling.

"This was in His mind, when He said—

"'To be born is to die; all-destroying, oblivion's breath holds sway;
As in gardens of Earth, flowers of Paradise fade, and pass away.'"

"Who is the author of that frightful, hope-destroying utterance?"

"Who but He, the Perfect One, the proved in life and in knowledge; who, out of pity for men, makes clear the doctrine, for the enlightenment of all of us, and the comfort of each one; who reveals to us the world with its beings—noble and degraded—its troops of gods, men, and demons; the Guide who shows the way out of this

world of change; the Master, the Perfect One, the Buddha."

"The Buddha is believed to have said that? Oh no, Vasitthi, that I do not credit. How often are the words of such great teachers misunderstood and inaccurately repeated, as I myself best know! For once, at Rajagriha, I spent the night in the entrance-hall of a potter, in the company of a foolish ascetic, who would insist on expounding the doctrine of the Buddha to me. What he advanced, however, was poor stuff, a self-fabricated and stupid doctrine, although I could, it is true, perceive that genuine sayings of the Master lay at the root of it—spoilt, however, in the attempt to correct them, and misinterpreted, by that contrary fellow. I am sure that wiseacres have also, here, reported this saying falsely to thee."

"Not so, my friend. For I have it from the lips of the Master himself."

"What, beloved? Thou hast thyself seen the Master, face to face?"

"I certainly have. I have sat at his feet."

"Oh, happy Vasitthi! For happy—that I can see—art thou now, in the memory of it. Ah, I also would be as happy and as confident as thou, had not, at the last moment, my evil fate—the fruit of wicked deeds of the past, grown ripe at that unhappy moment—robbed me of the joy of seeing the sublime Buddha. For a violent death swept me away as I was journeying to him, in the very place in which he was residing, too, in Rajagriha itself, on the morning after my talk with that fool of an ascetic. Only about a quarter of an hour's distance—just think of it—from the mango grove in which the Master had taken up his abode, did my fate overtake me.

But now is this given to me for comfort, that my Vasitthi succeeded in obtaining what was denied to me. Oh, tell me everything about thy coming to him, to the Master. For I am sure it will raise me up and strengthen me; and that saying, that seemed so terrible and so destructive of all hope, will grow clear and will lose its sting, yes, perhaps even contain some hidden ground for comfort."

"Gladly, my friend," replied Vasitthi.

They let themselves down on their lotus flowers, and Vasitthi went on with the story of her life.

XXXI

THE APPARITION ON THE TERRACE

When Satagira had reached the goal he had set himself, of possessing me as his wife, his love rapidly cooled, and the more quickly, that it met with no response on my side. I had promised to be a true wife to him, and he knew well that I would keep my word. But more did not lie in my power, even if I had wished it.

As I bore him only a daughter who died in her second year, no one wondered—and I, certainly, least of all—that he took a second wife. She bore him the wished-for son. As a consequence, she received the first place in the house; and was able, in clever fashion, to attach to herself the love that I had so willingly resigned. Over and above this, matters of business more and more claimed the attention of my husband, for, after the death of his father, he had succeeded the latter as Minister.

In this way, several years slipped quietly by, and I was left, for the most part, to myself, which was just what I desired. I gave myself up to my grief, communed only with memories, and lived in the hope of a happy meeting here above—a hope in which I have not been disappointed.

Satagira's palace lay close to the same ravine from which thou hast so often climbed up to the Terrace of the Sorrowless, but at a much steeper place, and had a terrace similar to the one at my father's house. Here I was

accustomed to spend all the fine evenings, in the hot season—often passing even the whole night there, reposing on a couch. For the rocky front of the ravine, which was, besides, surmounted by a high wall, was so steep and slippery that I felt certain no human being could scale it.

Once, on a mild and glorious moonlit night, I lay on my bed unable to sleep. I was thinking of thee, and particularly of that first evening together; the moment when I sat with Medini on the marble bench, on the Terrace, awaiting thy arrival, stood vividly before my mind's eye; and I thought of how, even before we hoped for it, thy form suddenly appeared over the top of the wall—for, in thy passionate ardour, thou hadst outdistanced Somadatta.

Lost in these sweet dreams, I had unconsciously let my gaze rest on the parapet, when suddenly a figure rose above it.

I was so convinced that no human being could ever scale this part of the wall, that I did not doubt in the least but that thy spirit, conjured up by my longing, had come to comfort me, and to bring news of the blessed place where thou didst now await me.

For which reason I was in no way frightened, but got up and extended my arms to embrace my visitor.

When, however, he stood on the Terrace and approached me with rapid steps, I saw that his figure was much taller than thine—indeed, even gigantic—and I perceived that I had the spirit of Angulimala before me. But at that I became so greatly terrified, that I was obliged to cling to the head of my couch in order not to fall down.

"Whom didst thou expect?" asked the fearful apparition, coming close to me.

"A spirit, but not thine," I answered.

" Kamanita's spirit ? "

I nodded.

" When thou madest thy movement of welcome," he went on, " I feared that thou hadst a lover who visited thee here at nights. If that were so, thou wouldst in no wise help me. And I need thy help as much as thou dost at present need mine."

At these strange words I ventured to look up, and now it seemed to me that I had no spirit before me, but a being of flesh and blood. The moon, however, was behind him, and, dazzled by its beams, as well as confused by my terror, I could only see the outlines of a figure which might well belong to a demon.

" I am not the spirit of Angulimala," he said, guessing my thoughts, " I am Angulimala himself, a living human being as thou art."

I began to tremble violently, not from fear, but because I was standing face to face with the man who had cruelly murdered my beloved.

" Do not be afraid, gracious lady," he went on, " thou hast nought to fear from me ; on the contrary, thou art the only person I myself have ever been afraid of, and whom I dared not look in the eyes, as thou didst so truly say, because I was deceiving thee."

" Thou didst deceive me ? " I exclaimed, and I scarcely know even now whether joy rose up in my soul, awakened by the hope that my loved one was yet alive, or whether yet greater despair did not seize upon me as I thought that I had allowed myself to be deluded into separating myself from the living.

" I did," he said, " and for that reason we are thrown upon one another. For we both have something to avenge, and on the same man—on Satagira ! "

With the bearing of a prince, this robber made a movement of his hand, bidding me be seated, as though he had much to say to me. I had been holding myself erect with difficulty, and now sank down upon the bench without power of volition. I gazed at him, breathlessly eager to hear his next words which should enlighten me as to the fate of my beloved.

"Kamanita with his caravan," he went on, "fell into my hands in the wooded region of the Vedisas. He defended himself bravely, but was captured unwounded, and, as the ransom arrived in good time, was sent home without molestation. He arrived safely in Ujjeni."

At this news a deep sigh escaped my breast. For the moment I felt only joy in the knowledge that my beloved was yet among the living, foolish as the feeling was. For, living, he was even further removed from me than he would have been by death.

"When I fell into Satagira's power," Angulimala continued, "he at once recognised the crystal chain with the tiger-eye amulet on my neck as the same which had belonged to Kamanita. On the following evening he came to my prison alone, and promised, to my unbounded astonishment, to give me my freedom if I would swear in the presence of a maiden that I had killed Kamanita. 'Thy oath alone,' he said, 'would, to be sure, not convince her, but she must believe the "Rite of Truth!"' He explained to me that I was, at the first hour of night, to be conducted to a terrace where the maiden would be found. He would see that the fetters were filed through so that I could without difficulty burst them, after which it would be an easy matter for me to swing myself over the breastwork, climb down into the ravine, and, following it down-

ward, to escape, as it finally ended in a narrow watercourse through which a small brook ran under the city wall and emptied itself into the Gunga. With a solemn oath he swore that he would do nothing to hinder my escape from Kosambi.

"It is true I did not trust him overmuch, but I saw no other way of escape. To perform the 'Rite of Truth,' and, in so doing, to utter an absolute falsehood—nothing whatever could have induced me to do that, I acknowledge; for I should thereby have called down on myself the most fearful judgment of the angry and insulted goddess. But I saw at once how I could so express my oath as not in so many words to tell an untruth, while, at the same time, every one hearing would believe I had killed Kamanita; and I trusted that Kali, who finds pleasure in craftiness of all kinds, would stand by me with all her power, on account of this masterpiece, and would lead me safely through the snares which the treachery of Satagira might lay for me.

"Everything now fell out, as a matter of fact, in the way we had arranged, and thou thyself didst see how I burst the iron chains asunder. But, to this day, I don't know whether Satagira kept faith with me and had the chains filed through, as he promised, or whether Kali helped me by a miracle. I am more inclined, however, to believe the former. For scarcely had I swum a few fathoms out into the Gunga when I was fallen upon by a boatload of armed men. So he had evidently relied upon that ambush. Yet here could be seen what Kali's help is worth; for, although the pieces of chain hanging to my wrists were my only weapons, I succeeded in killing every man of them, and on the boat, which had capsized during the fight, I fortunately reached the safe north bank,

though, to be sure, not without bearing away so many and such deep wounds that a whole year passed before I had recovered from them. During that time I often swore that Satagira should expiate what he had done. And now the time for that expiation has come."

In my heart there raged a storm of indignation at this unheard of deception which had been practised upon me. I couldn't blame the robber for saving his life as he did, and, as he hadn't soiled his hands with the blood of my beloved, I forgot for the moment how much other innocent blood adhered to them, and felt neither fear nor disgust in the presence of this man who, whatever he might have done, had brought me the message that my Kamanita yet dwelt in this world, even as I. But a bitter hatred rose up within me against him to whose guilt it was owing that we were obliged to wander apart to the end of our earth journey, and I heard Angulimala threaten his life with an involuntary pleasure which, I imagine, was to be read in the expression of my face.

For, in an excited and passionate tone of voice, Angulimala continued—

"I perceive, noble lady, that thy lofty soul thirsts for revenge, and soon thou shalt have thy desire. For with that end in view I have come hither. Many weeks have I lain in wait for Satagira, just outside of Kosambi, and at last have learned from a sure source that, in the course of the next few days, he will leave the town for the valleys lying to the east, where a legal dispute, at present impending between two villages, has to be settled. My original plan, formed before I knew of this, was to force him to make a sally against me in order to take me prisoner again; but this journey of his has greatly simplified matters. To be sure I have, in pursuance of my first

intention, made no secret of my presence, but have let my deeds speak for me, and the report of my reappearance has for a long time been freely circulated.

"Although most people believe that some imposter has arisen who gives himself out for Angulimala, yet fear has already seized on people to such an extent that only large and well-armed bands now venture out into the wooded region to the east, where I have my headquarters. To all appearance, it is true, thou hast heard nothing of it, probably for the reason that, as a woman despoiled of her life happiness, thou dost dwell alone with thy grief."

"I have certainly heard of a daring band of robbers, but without mention as yet of thy name, wherefore I believed at first I saw thy ghost."

"But Satagira has heard me named," went on the robber, "depend on that, and, as he has good reason to believe that it is the veritable Angulimala, and yet better reason to fear him, it may be taken for granted that he will not only travel under powerful escort, but will also take other precautions and make use of many devices, with intent to conceal his real plans. However, although the band which I command is not very large, neither the one nor the other shall help him, if I only know for certain at what hour he moves out and what road he takes. And this it is that I hope to learn from thee."

Although I had up till now listened to what he had to say, dumb with amazement, and, as if laid under a ban, without thinking how much I was already compromising myself by doing so, yet, at this suggestion, I rose up indignantly and asked what gave him the right to believe that I had sunk low enough to take a thief and robber as an ally.

"In the case of an ally," replied Angulimala quietly,

"the chief thing is that he is to be depended upon, and thou dost feel—of that I am convinced—that I am absolutely to be relied upon in this matter. On the other hand I need thy help, for only in that way can I learn with certainty what I wish to know. True, I have a source of information which is usually reliable, and from which, as a matter of fact, I know of Satagira's journey, yet, if the latter causes a false report to be circulated, even this source can become untrustworthy. But thou dost need me, because a proud and lofty soul finds, in a case like thine, satisfaction only in the death of the traitor. If thou wert a man, then thou wouldst kill him thyself; as thou art a woman, my arm is necessary to thee."

I was about to dismiss him angrily, but he gave me to understand, with such a dignified movement of his hand, that he had not said all he had to say, that, against my will, I became silent.

"Thus far, noble lady, I have spoken of revenge. But there is something other and weightier to come. For thee, to secure future happiness; for me, to atone for the past. With justice, it is said of me that I am cruel, without pity for man or beast. Yes, I have done a thousand deeds, for each of which one must do penance, as the priests teach, for a hundred or even a thousand years in the lowest hell. It is true I had a wise and learned friend, Vajaçravas, whom the common people now even reverence as a saint, and on whose grave I have offered rich sacrifices; he often demonstrated to us that there were no such hell punishments, but that, on the contrary, the robber was the most Brahman-filled of all living beings and the crown of creation. Yet he was somehow never able to convince me of the truth of his position.

"Be that as it may, however—whether there are hell-punishments or not—this is certain, that, of all my deeds, only one lies heavy on my conscience, and that is, that with my crafty 'Rite of Truth' I cheated thee. Even then I did not dare to look thee in the face, and the memory of that hour sits ever like a thorn in my flesh. Well, the wrong I did thee then, I would now like to make good, so far as that is still possible, and to do away with the evil consequences of my act. Thou wert separated by my guilty dealing from Kamanita whom thou didst believe to be dead, and wert chained to this false Satagira. These fetters I now wish to take from thee that thou mayst be free to unite thyself to thy beloved, and I will myself go to Ujjeni and bring him safe and sound. Now do thy part—I will do mine. For a beautiful woman, it is not difficult to draw a secret from her husband. To-morrow, as soon as it is dark, I shall come hither to get the necessary information from thee."

He bowed deeply, and, before it was possible for me in my bewilderment and dismay to utter a word, he vanished from the Terrace as suddenly as he had appeared.

XXXII

SATAGIRA

The whole night through I remained on the Terrace, the unresisting prey of passions, hitherto unknown to me, but which were now unchained, and which made sport of my heart as the whirlwind does of the leaf.

My Kamanita was still alive! He had heard, in his distant home, of my marriage, for otherwise he would have come long ago. How faithless—or how pitilessly weak, must I appear in his eyes! And for this degradation of mine, Satagira was alone to blame. My hate for him grew more deadly with every passing minute, and deeply did I feel the truth of Angulimala's words, that, if I had been a man, I should have assuredly killed Satagira.

Then the prospect that Angulimala had so unexpectedly opened up to me presented itself—that, if I were free, I could marry my beloved. At the thought my whole being became so wildly excited, that I felt as if the blood must rend my breast and temples. Incapable of holding myself erect, I was not even able to totter to the bench, but sank down upon the marble tiles and my senses left me.

The coolness of the morning dew brought me back to my unhappy existence and its terrible questions.

Was it then true that I wished to band myself with a robber and thousandfold murderer, in order to get the man out of the way who had once led me round the nuptial fire?

But I had not the least knowledge yet of when my husband was to leave. And how was I to ascertain the time of his departure or the exact route he intended to take, if he made a secret of these. "For a beautiful woman, it is never difficult to draw a secret from her husband"—these words of the robber's yet rang in my ears and made plain to me the whole baseness of such a course of action. Never would I be able to make up my mind to worm myself by tenderness into his confidence, in order then to betray him to his arch-enemy. But just because I felt this so clearly, did it also become clear to me that it was really only the treacherous and hypocritical worming out of his secret that I deeply loathed. Had I already been in possession of it—had I known whither to go in order to find a tablet on which it all stood written—I should certainly have furnished Angulimala with the fatal information.

When this became plain to me I trembled with horror as though I were already guilty of Satagira's death. I thanked fate that there was no possibility of getting this information, for even if I had been able to learn at what hour they were to start, yet only Satagira himself and, at the most, perhaps one confidant, would know what roads and paths had been decided upon.

I saw the rising sun gild the towers and cupolas of Kosambi as I had seen this ravishing spectacle so many a time from the Terrace of the Sorrowless—but ah! with what quite other feelings than when I spent the blessed night hours there with thee! Unhappy as never before, weary and miserable, as though I had in this one night aged by decades, I betook myself back to the palace.

In order to reach my room I was obliged to go through a long gallery, opening off which were several chambers

with barred windows. As I passed one of these I heard voices. The one—that of my husband—was just then raised—

"Good!—we start to-night—an hour after midnight."

I had stopped involuntarily. So I knew the hour! But the road? A flush of shame suffused my face for having played the eavesdropper. "Fly, fly!" a voice made itself heard within me, "there is yet time!" But I stood as if rooted to the spot.

Satagira, however, said nothing further. He may have heard my footsteps and their stopping at the door, for the latter was suddenly torn open. My husband stood before me.

"I heard thy voice in passing," I said, with quick resolution, "and thought of asking whether I should bring thee some refreshments as thou hast business so early. Then I feared to disturb thee and was about to pass on." Satagira looked at me without suspicion and even with great friendliness.

"I thank thee," he said; "I need no refreshments, but thou dost in no way disturb me. On the contrary, I was about to send for thee and only feared that thou were not yet risen. Thou canst, just at this moment, be of the greatest service to me."

He invited me to enter his room, which I did with supreme astonishment, very curious to know what the service might be which he desired from me,—just at this moment, when a deadly purpose against him filled my whole being.

A man, in whom I recognised the master of Satagira's horse and his most trusted follower, was sitting on a low bench. He rose as I entered and bowed. Satagira invited me to sit down beside himself, signed to the officer to be seated again, and turned to me.

"The matter is this, my dear Vasitthi. I am obliged, as soon as possible, to undertake a journey in order to adjust a village quarrel in the province to the east. Now, for several weeks, robbers have been seen in the wooded region east of Kosambi, and, as a matter of fact, very near to the town. Indeed, a foolish tale has even arisen that their leader is no other than Angulimala, people having the unheard-of effrontery to assert that Angulimala had, on the last occasion, escaped from prison, and that I had, in place of his head, stuck up another very like it over the gate. Of course we can offord to laugh at all such fantastic stories. But, nevertheless, this robber does not seem to stand much behind the famous Angulimala in point of audacity, and, if he really gives himself out for the latter in order, by the use of his renowned name, to gain a large following, his intention assuredly is to perform some particularly brilliant feat. For that reason a certain amount of prudence is, under all circumstances, advisable."

A small table, inlaid with precious stones, stood beside him, and on it a silk handkerchief.

He took the handkerchief up and mopped his forehead, observing, as he did so, that the day was very hot in spite of the early hour. I perceived, of course, that it was fear of Angulimala which caused the perspiration to flow from his every pore. But instead of awaking my pity, the sight only filled me with contempt for him. I saw that he was no hero, and asked myself with astonishment by what lucky accident he had chanced to take Angulimala prisoner—Angulimala, the robber—who seemed to me to be like the terrible Bhima in Mahabharata, at whose side thou thyself, my dear Kamanita, didst fight on the plain of Kurukshetra.

"Now, however," my husband meantime went on, "I

cannot well arrive in these villages with a whole army; indeed, I should not like to take more than thirty mounted men with me on this journey. But all the more are prudence and diplomatic stratagem in place. I have just been discussing this with my faithful Panduka, and he has made a good suggestion of which I will also inform thee, in order that thou mayst not be in a state of too great anxiety on my account, during these days."

I murmured something that was intended to signify gratitude for this consideration.

"Panduka will, therefore," he went on, "make all necessary preparations, and with a great deal of ostentation, as though I intended early to-morrow to make an expedition to the east with a fairly large body of troops to capture the robbers. If these, then—which I do not doubt—have their accomplices here in town, who keep them informed of what goes on, they are certain to be deceived by it. In the meantime I shall start with my thirty riders an hour after midnight and, going out of the southern gate, shall take my way in a wide sweep through the hilly land to the east. Yet, even so, I should like to avoid the main roads until I have left Kosambi several miles behind. Now, just in this neighbourhood lies thy father's summer residence, and there thou knowest every road and path from childhood up; thou wilt be able then, I imagine, to help me greatly in this matter."

I was at once ready to do so, and, while I described everything to him in detail, I had a drawing-board brought, and drew upon it an exact map of the neighbourhood of our country house, with crosses at the places which he must specially note. But chiefly did I recommend to him a certain path which led through a ravine. This ravine narrowed gradually till, finally, for a short distance, even

two men could not ride through it abreast. On the other hand, however, the path was so little known that, even if the robbers should suspect him of making such a detour, not one of them would ever think of looking for him there.

In this ravine, however, I had, as an innocent child, played with my brothers, as well as with Medini, and our tenant's children.

Satagira noticed that the hand with which I drew on the board trembled, and asked me if I were feverish. I answered that it was only a little tiredness after a sleepless night. But he took my hand, and found to his apprehension that it was cold and damp, and, when I wished to withdraw it with the remark that that signified nothing, continued to hold it in his own while he exhorted me to be prudent and to take care of myself; and in his look and voice I observed, with unspeakable resentment and even with horror, something of the admiring tenderness of those days when he had sued for my hand in vain. I hastened to say that I really did not feel quite well, and intended to betake myself at once to bed.

But Satagira followed me out into the gallery and there, where we were alone, he began to excuse himself. He had, it was true, he said, neglected me for a long time for the mother of his son, but after his return that should be different; it would no longer be necessary for me to spend the nights alone on the Terrace.

He showed a tenderness that seemed to have arisen from the grave of a long-forgotten youthful love, a love which, as I was forced to recognise, had even, with a certain stubborn fidelity, existed only for me; but although this could not fail to dispose my heart somewhat in his favour, so that, for a moment, I wavered in my purpose, yet

his parting words, which were uttered with a honeyed smile and loathsome familiarity, were but too surely of a nature to destroy this inclination again, inasmuch as they reminded me of rights which had been filched from me by his cowardly treachery.

XXXIII

ANGULIMALA

A FRIGHTFUL calm now came over me as I returned to my room. There was nothing more to be considered, no doubt to be combated, no questions to be answered. All was decided; his Karma willed it so. By his double treachery his life was plainly forfeit to me and to Angulimala.

So great was this calm that I fell asleep instantly I laid myself down on my couch, as though my whole being were anxiously endeavouring to bridge over the empty hours of waiting.

When it became dark I went to the Terrace; the moon had not yet risen. I had not long to wait; Angulimala's powerful figure swung itself over the parapet and came straight to the bench on which I sat half averted from him.

I did not move and, without raising my eyes from the pattern of the coloured marble tiles, I spoke—

"What thou dost wish to learn, I know. Everything. The hour when he leaves, the strength of his escort, the direction he takes, and the roads and paths over which he goes. Under the influence of his evil Karma, he himself forced his confidence upon me, otherwise I should have known nothing of it, for I would never have drawn it from him by feigned tenderness."

I had well considered these words of mine; for so foolish are we in our pride that even now, when I was

making myself the tool of a criminal, it was to me an unendurable thought that I should appear lower in his eyes than I really was.

Not less studied were my next words—

"Of all this, however, thou wilt not hear one syllable unless thou dost first promise that thou wilt *only* kill but in nc wise torture him; and that thou wilt kill only *him* but not even one of his escort; unless it be necessary in self-defence. I will, however, indicate a spot to thee where thou canst deal him his death-blow when he is absolutely alone and so without any kind of fray. This, therefore, thou must promise me with a solemn oath. Otherwise thou canst kill me, but not one word more shalt thou hear."

"Truly as I have been, to this day, a faithful servant of Kali," replied Angulimala, "so truly will I kill none of his escort and so truly shall he suffer no torture."

"Good," I said, "I will trust thee. Now then, listen, and note every detail exactly. If thou hast accomplices in the town thou wilt have learnt already that preparations are being made for advancing against the robbers to-morrow. That is, however, all empty show to deceive thee. In reality, Satagira, escorted by thirty horsemen, rides from the town by the south gate an hour after midnight, leaves the Sinsapa wood lying to his left, and sweeps out in a somewhat more southerly direction, in order then to move eastward over byways through the hill country."

And I now gave him an absolutely exact description of the neighbourhood, including the narrow ravine through which Satagira would have to pass, and where he could easily and surely be killed.

An oppressive silence followed my words, during which I

heard nothing save my own hard breathing. I felt that I had not yet strength to rise and leave the terrace as I had purposed doing.

Finally Angulimala spoke, and the gentle, and even sad, note in his voice surprised me to such a degree that I was almost terrified, and started involuntarily.

"And so it would have happened," said he, "and thou, the tender, gentle wife, who has assuredly never wilfully injured even the meanest of creatures, wouldst now have been in alliance with the vilest of human beings, a wretch whose hands drip blood. Yes, the murder of thy husband would have burdened thy conscience and would now be spinning its black Karma threads on the downward path, on into the infernal world—that is, so it would have been, if thou hadst now been speaking to the robber Angulimala."

I didn't know whether I could believe my ears. To whom else had I spoken then? It was certainly the voice of Angulimala, even if with that wonderful change of tone; and as I turned abruptly round, now thoroughly dismayed, and looked intently at him, it was beyond all doubt the robber-chieftain who stood before me, even if, in his whole bearing, another character seemed to be expressed than that which on the previous day had held me in its fearful thrall.

"But have no fear, noble lady," he added, "all this has not happened. Nothing has happened, not any more than if thou hadst addressed thy speech to this tree."

These words were as puzzling to me as those that had preceded them. But so much I understood, that, for some reason, he had given up his plan of vengeance on Satagira.

After I had worked myself up through frightful inner struggles to such an unnatural pitch of crime, this sudden

incomprehensible melting away, this ghostlike loss of action, was a disappointment which I could not bear. The unusual strain to which my whole nature had been subjected found vent in a stream of abuse hurled in Angulimala's face. I called him a dishonourable villain, a faithless, empty braggart, a dastard, and much more—the worst names I could think of—for I hoped that, when irritated in this way, the man, notorious throughout India for his violent temper, would, with one blow of his iron fist, stretch me lifeless on the ground.

But when I stopped, more because breath failed me than words, Angulimala answered with a quiet that put me to shame—

"All this and more also have I deserved from thee, and I do not believe that thou wouldst have been able with it so to irritate even the old Angulimala that he would have killed thee—for to accomplish this, is, as I well perceive, thy intention. But even if another had now said this and worse, I would not only have borne it quietly but would indeed have been grateful to him for giving me the opportunity of undergoing a salutary test. Has not the Master himself taught me: 'Like to the Earth, shalt thou exercise evenness of temper. Even as one casts upon the earth that which is clean and that which is unclean, and the earth is neither horrified thereat nor resists—so also shalt thou, like to the earth, exercise evenness of temper.' For thou dost speak, Vasitthi, not with the robber, but with the disciple, Angulimala."

"What kind of disciple? What Master?" I asked, with contemptuous impatience, although the strange speech of this incomprehensible man did not fail to exercise a peculiar, almost a fascinating, effect upon me.

"He whom they call the Perfect One, the Discerner of

Men, the Fully-Enlightened One, the Buddha," he answered; "he is the Master. Thou hast assuredly heard of him ere now?"

I shook my head.

"I count myself happy," he exclaimed, "in that I am the first from whose lips thou dost hear the name of the Blessed One. If Angulimala once, as robber, did thee much evil, he has done thee now, as disciple, more of good."

"Who is, then, this Buddha?" I asked again, in the same tone, without wishing to let it be seen how much my sympathy was awakened. "What has he to do with this enigmatical behaviour of thine, and what blessing could it bring me to hear his name?"

"Even to hear the name of him whom they call 'The Welcome One,'" said Angulimala, "is as the first shimmer of light to him who sits in darkness. But I will relate everything to thee—how he met me, and how he changed the current of my life; for certain it is that its happening just this day has not been least on thy account."

In spite of the fierceness which emanated from his whole being, even on the first evening a certain grace of bearing had surprised me in him; how much more striking, however, was the unsought dignity with which he now sat down beside me, like one who feels himself among his equals.

XXXIV

THE HELL OF SPEARS

I STOOD to-day—he began—a few hours after sunrise at the edge of the forest, gazing out at the towers of Kosambi, my mind full of vengeance on Satagira and revolving the question as to whether thou wouldst bring me the desired information, when, on the road which leads from the eastern gate to the forest, I became aware of a solitary traveller, garbed in a yellow cloak, who paced vigorously forward. On both sides of the road, herdsmen and peasants were busied with their daily toil. And I observed how those who were nearest the road shouted something to the lonely traveller, while those who were farther off also paused in the middle of their work, looked after him, and pointed with their fingers. The men who were near enough appeared, the farther he advanced, to warn him the more eagerly, yes, even to seek to stop him, while some ran after him, seized his cloak, and then with hurried and horror-stricken gestures pointed to the wood. I almost believed I could hear them calling to him, "No farther! Don't go into the forest! There the fearful robber Angulimala has his lair."

But the traveller came onward, undisturbed, in the direction of the wood. And now I saw from his cloak and his closely shaven head that he was an ascetic, one of those who belong to the Order of the Son of the Sakyas, an old man of commanding stature.

And I thought to myself, "Passing strange, truly! On this road ten men, ay, even thirty, and fifty, have already set out in companies and well armed, and they have one and all fallen into my power; and that ascetic there comes on alone, like any conqueror."

And it nettled me that he so openly set my power at defiance. I made up my mind to kill him, and the rather as I thought to myself that he might possibly be sent into the forest as a spy, by Satagira. For these ascetics—so I thought—are all hypocritical and venal, and are ready to be used in all kinds of ways, building upon the superstition of the people and the safety they enjoy as its outcome—for so I had been taught by my learned friend Vajaçravas to regard them.

Instantly making up my mind, I seized my spear, hung my bow and quiver over my shoulder, made for the road, and, step for step, followed the ascetic, who had now entered the forest.

Finally, when I had reached a favourable spot where no trees separated us, I took down my bow from my shoulder, and shot an arrow so that it must of necessity pierce the left side of his back and pass through his heart; but it flew away over the head of the ascetic.

"By some mistake, a very bad arrow must have got among the others," I said to myself, took the quiver in my hand, and chose out a beautifully feathered and faultless one, which I so aimed that it must necessarily transfix the neck of the ascetic. But the arrow struck into the trunk of a tree to his left. The next flew past him to the right, and the same thing happened with all my arrows till my quiver was empty.

"Inconceivable! Most extraordinary!" I thought to myself. "Have I not often amused myself by placing a

prisoner with his back against a fence and shooting my arrows at him in such a way that, after he had stepped aside, the whole outline of his body was indicated exactly by the arrows sticking in the fence—and that, at a greater distance? Am I not accustomed with my arrow to bring down from the sky the eagle in full flight? Whatever is the matter with my hand to-day?"

Meanwhile the ascetic had gained a considerable start, and I began to run after him in order to kill him with my spear. But when I had come to within a distance of about fifty paces from him I didn't gain another step, although I ran with all my might and although the ascetic seemed but to be pacing quite leisurely onward.

Then I said to myself, "Of a truth, this is the most wonderful thing of all. Have I not overtaken frightened elephants and fleeing deer? And now I cannot, running with all my might, overtake this ascetic, going forward at his leisure. What is the matter with my feet to-day?"

And I stopped and called to him—

"Stand still, ascetic! Stand still!"

But he paced quietly on and called back—

"I am standing still, Angulimala! Stand thou also still!"

Whereat I was again much astonished, and thought: "Plainly this ascetic has, by some Rite of Truth, baffled my archery; by some Rite of Truth, my running. How can he then utter a manifest untruth and assert that he is standing still while he is, as a matter of fact, walking, and demand that I should stand still, although he sees perfectly well that I am already standing as still as this tree. So might the flying goose say to the oak: 'I am standing still, oak! Stand thou also still!' Of a surety, there must be something behind all this.

It might probably be of more value to understand the secret meaning of these ascetic words than to kill an ascetic."

And I called to him—

"Walking, thou dost imagine thyself to be standing still, ascetic, and me, who stand still, thou dost erroneously believe to be walking. Explain this to me, ascetic. How art thou standing still? How am I not standing still?"

And he answered me—

"I, who do evil to no created being, am at rest, wander no more; but thou, who dost rage against all created beings, must wander ceaselessly from one place of suffering to another."

I answered again—

"That we wander ever, I have of course heard. But that about standing still, about wandering no more, I do not understand. Wilt thou, Reverend Sir, fully explain to me what thou hast just summed up in these few words? See, I have put my spear from me, and solemnly swear to grant thee peace."

"For the second time, Angulimala," he said, "thou hast sworn falsely."

"For the second time?"

"The first time it happened was at that false Rite of Truth."

That he should know of that secret matter was not the smallest of these marvels to me; but, without pausing over that, I made haste to defend my crafty deed.

"My words, Reverend Sir, were on that occasion certainly somewhat ambiguous, but, literally, I swore nothing false, only the sense was misleading. That, however, which I swear to thee is true literally and in fact."

"Not so," he answered, "for thou canst grant me no peace. It were well for thee if thou didst suffer thyself to receive peace from me."

As he thus spoke, he turned round, and motioned to me with a friendly gesture to approach.

"Willingly, Reverend Sir," I humbly said.

"Listen, then; and pay good attention."

He sat down in the shadow of a large tree, and bade me seat myself at his feet. And he began to teach me of good and evil deeds and of their consequences, all the while explaining everything fully as when one speaks to a child. For I was, of course, quite uneducated, whereas the pupils of ascetics are, as a rule, Brahman youths who even know the Veda. I, however, had never listened to speech so fraught with deep thought since I sat in the forest by night at the feet of Vajaçravas, of whom I have already spoken to thee, and whose name thou hast, I imagine, heard from others also.

But when this ascetic now revealed to me that no arbitrary heavenly power, but our own hearts alone, with the thoughts and deeds emanating from these, cause us to be born now here, now there, at one time on earth, at another in heaven, and then again in hell—I could not help thinking of that Vajaçravas and of the way in which he had proved to us by reasons of common sense, and by reference to the sacred writings, that there could be no hell-punishments, and that all the passages in the sacred writings having reference to such had been interpolated by weak and cowardly souls in order that by such threats they might terrify the strong and courageous, and protect themselves from the violence of the latter. "Friend Vajaçravas was never," I thought, "able to convince me quite. I wonder whether this ascetic will be able to do so. Here stands, as a matter of fact, opinion against

opinion, scholar against scholar. For even if this ascetic should be one of the great disciples of the Son of the Sakyas, yet Vajaçravas was also highly thought of by his own followers, and now, after his death, is even worshipped by the common people as a saint. Who, then, is to decide as to which of these two is in the right?"

"Thou art no longer attending to what I say, Angulimala," said the ascetic; "thou art thinking of that Vajaçravas and his erroneous doctrines."

Much astonished, I acknowledged the truth of what he said.

"So thou, Reverend Sir, didst also know my friend Vajaçravas?"

"People showed me his grave outside of the gate, and I saw foolish travellers offering up prayers there under the delusion that he was a saint."

"So he is no saint, then?"

"Well, if he seems one to thee, let us visit him and see how it fares now with his saintship."

The ascetic said this as though it were a matter of going from one house to another. Thoroughly taken aback, I stared at him.

"Visit him? Vajaçravas? How were that possible?"

"Give me thy hand," he said. "I shall cast myself into that state of self-absorption by the aid of which the path that leads to the gods and that which leads to the demons become visible to a steadfast heart. Then we shall follow in his track, and what I see, that shalt thou also see."

I gave him my hand. For some time he sat there perfectly still, his eyes cast down, the pupils directed inward, and I was conscious of nothing. Suddenly, however, I felt, as probably a swimmer may feel, when the

demon who dwells in the waters seizes his arm and draws him down, so that the blue heavens and the trees on the bank disappear, and the waves meet over his head, and darkness that grows ever deeper closes round him on every side.

From time to time, however, tongues of flame flared up around me, and a mighty noise thundered in my ears.

Finally, I found myself in what seemed to be a vast cave, where it was quite dark save for the fitful illumination furnished by the fleeting gleam of countless lightning flashes. When I had grown somewhat accustomed to the darkness, I discovered that these flashes were the reflections of iron spear-heads, which darted hither and thither as though lances were being wielded by invisible arms—it might be in a battle of ghosts. I heard screams also—not fierce and courageous, however, as those of combatants drunk with the joy of battle, but screams of pain and groans of wounded, whom, however, I did not see. For these terrifying sounds came from the background, where the quivering of the lance-heads formed one trembling and whirling mist. The foreground was empty.

In this empty space there now appeared three figures, vomited, as it were, from the black mouth of a den which opened upon it from the right. The man in the middle was Vajaçravas; his naked body trembled from head to foot as though he froze terribly or was shaken by fever. His companions had both of them human bodies which were supported upon birds' legs armed with powerful claws, and were surmounted, in the one case, by a fish's head, in the other, by a dog's. In his hands, each bore a long spear. The figure with the fish's head spoke first—

"This, Reverend Sir, is the Hell of Spears, where thou, according to the sentence of the Judge of Hell, hast to

endure punishment for ten thousand years in being ceaselessly pierced by these quivering spears. Afterwards thou shalt be born again somewhere, according to thy further deserts."

Then he with the dog's head spoke—

"As often, Reverend Sir, as two spears cross in thy heart, know that a thousand years of thy hellish torture have passed."

Scarcely had he said this when both of the infernal watchmen swung their lances and transfixed Vajaçravas. As if at a given signal, all the spears round about also flashed towards him, their points entering from every side. So ravens hurl themselves upon an abandoned carcase, and bury their beaks in its flesh.

Overcome by the horror of the sight, and by the pitiful screams that Vajaçravas uttered in his agony, my senses forsook me.

When I came to myself again, I lay in the wood, under the huge tree, prostrate at the feet of the Master.

"Hast thou seen, Angulimala?"

"I have seen, O Master."

And I did not dare even to add, "Deliver me"; for how could *I* seek to be delivered?

"If thou then, after the dissolution of thy body, in consequence of thy deeds, dost come to the road that leads down to the underworld, and the Judge of the Shades passes the same judgment upon thee, and the guards of hell lead thee into the Hell of Spears to the same punishment, will it be more than thou dost deserve?"

"No, Master, it will not be more than I deserve."

"But a course of life, of which thou thyself dost confess that it justly leads to these unspeakable tortures—is this truly, Angulimala, a course of life that is worth pursuing?"

"No, O Master, this course of life will I give up; I will forswear all my devilish practices for one word of thy truth."

"Once, long ages ago, Angulimala, the Judge of the Shades pondered deeply, and this was the outcome: 'Verily, he who has committed offences in the world is punished with such manifold punishments! Oh, that I might become human, and that a Perfect One, a Fully Enlightened Buddha might appear in the world, and that I might be able to be with him, with that Perfect One, and that he, the Perfect One, might expound the truth to me, and that I understood it!'

"Now that which that judge wished so ardently for himself, that has been given to thee, Angulimala. Thou hast become man. But even as, Angulimala, in this land of India, few smiling groves, splendid forests, fair heights, and charming lotus ponds are to be found, and in comparison with these, raging rivers, untrodden forests, desolate rocky mountains, and barren deserts are by far more numerous:

"Even so also, but few created beings attain to humanity, in comparison with the far more numerous beings who in other kingdoms than that of man come into existence:

"Even so also, but few generations are on the earth at the same time as a Buddha, in comparison with the far greater number in whose time no Buddha has arisen:

"Even so also, but few individuals of those few generations are so fortunate as to see the Perfect One, in comparison with that far greater number who do not see him.

"But thou, Angulimala, hast become man; and that at a time when a Perfect Buddha has appeared in the world; and thou hast seen him, and art able to be with him, with the Perfect One."

When I heard these words, I folded my hands and exclaimed—

"Hail, O Holy One! So thou art thyself the Fully Enlightened Buddha! So thou, the noblest of beings, hast had pity on the worst! And wilt thou then, O Perfect One, suffer me to abide with thee?"

"I will," answered the Master. "And so hear this also:

"Even so are there among the few who see the Master but few who hear his doctrine, and, of these, but few who comprehend it. Thou, however, wilt hear the doctrine and wilt comprehend it. Come, disciple!"

The Perfect One had entered the wood like an elephant hunter who rides upon his tame elephant. He left the wood again, as the elephant hunter leaves the wood, followed by a wild elephant which his skill has tamed.

Thus, then, I am now come to thee Vasitthi, not the robber Angulimala, but the disciple Angulimala. See, I have cast from me the spear and bludgeon, rod and scourge, have forsworn killing and torturing, and before me all created things have peace.

XXXV

A PURE OFFERING

I DO not know how long it was before I opened my lips; but for a very long time, I believe, I sat there without uttering a word, and let everything Angulimala had said rise, point by point, before me, and the more I reflected the more did my wonder grow. For although I had heard many legends of olden times of miracles wrought by the gods, and particularly of the wonderful deeds of Krishna when he sojourned on this earth, yet they all appeared, one with another, trivial when I compared them with what had befallen Angulimala in the forest this day.

And I asked myself now whether that great man who had in a few hours transformed the most brutal of robbers into the gentle being who had just spoken to me—that Perfect One who had so easily and surely tamed the most savage object to be found in the whole realm of nature—whether he was not also able to quiet my troubled and passion-tossed heart, and to banish, by the light of his words, the night-cloud which grief had caused to settle down on it. Or was this mayhap yet more difficult—indeed a problem the solution of which went beyond the powers of even the holiest ascetic?

Almost did I fear that the latter might be the case, but yet I asked where that great ascetic whom he called his Master was to be found, and whether I should be able to visit him.

"It is right that thou shouldst ask that question at the very first," answered Angulimala, "and really what shouldst thou ask save this? Just for that very reason have I come to thee. We who purposed being associates in evil, let us now be associates in good. The Perfect One abides at present in the Sinsapa wood of which thou thyself didst make mention. Betake thyself thither to-morrow, but not till evening. For then the monks have finished their silent meditation, and assembled before the old Krishna temple, and the Master speaks to them there and to any others who are present. For at that hour many men and women go thither from the town in order to see the Blest One and to listen to his luminous teachings; and with each evening the press grows greater. Often these meetings last till late into the night. Of all that, I had already exact information, because, in the sinfulness of my heart, I had forged the monstrous plan of shortly falling upon the assembly with my followers. The gifts of foodstuffs and cloths brought by many of the visitors as presents to the Order already form a booty which, if not rich, is yet by no means to be despised. But specially it was my intention to capture several citizens of distinction, and to force heavy ransoms from them; and I cherished, at the same time, the hope that I should by such a daring deed, done at the very gates of the town, at last entice Satagira without the walls. For, when I formed the plan, his impending journey was still unknown to me. Do not neglect then, noble lady, to go to-morrow towards sundown to the old Krishna temple; it will long be a source of salvation to thee. I want to get back there now as quickly as possible. It is not certain, of course, whether I shall be in time to hear anything. Still, on such beautiful moonlit nights, the monks stay long together, deep in

religious conversation, and willingly permit others to listen."

He bent himself low before me, and quickly went away.

The next forenoon I sent to Medini, who was, with her husband Somadatta, just as ready to bear me company to the Krishna grove as she had been in those days of the past, when the matter in hand was the bringing about of a meeting between two lovers. As a matter of fact, she had already begged her husband once to take her out there some evening, for she didn't readily let anything escape her of which people talked. But Somadatta had been afraid of the house Brahman, and so she was more than delighted to have the excuse, as over against that tyrant, of a summons from the wife of the Minister.

We drove at once to the markets, where Somadatta, who was attending to his vocations there, helped us in seeking out such stuffs as were suitable for the clothing of the monks and nuns. I also purchased a large quantity of medicines. Arrived at home again, we plundered the storerooms. Vessels full of the finest ghee, boxes of honey and sugar, jars with preserves of every kind, were set aside for our pious object. My own cupboards had to furnish the choicest of all they contained of perfumed water, sandal-powder, and camphor; and then we went to the garden, whose wealth of flowers we did not spare.

When the longed-for hour came, all these things had been loaded on a wagon to which the mules were already harnessed. We ourselves took our seats under the awning of another wagon, and, drawn by the two silver-white, full-blooded, Sindh horses which every morning ate three-year-old rice from my hand, drove out at the city gate.

The sun was already nearing the cupolas and towers of the town behind us, and its rays gilded the dust which, along

the whole way, was stirred up by the multitude that, like ourselves—the most of them, however, on foot—had come out to see and hear the Buddha.

We soon reached the entrance to the forest. Here we had the wagons stopped, and pursued our way on foot, followed by servants who bore the votive offerings we had brought with us.

Since that night when we had taken leave of one another here, I had not been in this wood. And when I now, in the same company, entered its cool shade, I was overcome by so piercing a breath of memory—an odour that seemed to have been stored up for me here till its concentrated sweetness had, with the lapse of years, become poison—that I remained standing like one stupefied.

It seemed to me as if my love, awakened to its full strength, had placed itself in my way, charging me with desertion and with treachery. For I had not come there, as I knew, to give it fresh nourishment by inhaling the odour of memory, but to seek peace for my disappointed and tortured heart. And could not that, with justice, be called forgetting love, wilfully renouncing it? Was not that the violation of my word, and cowardly treachery?

In such fearful uncertainty did I stand there, undecided whether to go on or to turn back—to the great disappointment of Medini, who danced with impatience when others overtook us.

The look of the interior of the forest, however, softly illumined by the golden rays of the late afternoon sun; the gentle admonitory rustle and whisper of the leaves; the people who at once on entering grew silent and looked around expectantly and almost timidly; here and there at the foot of some great tree, an ascetic, wrapped in the folds of his yellow cloak, his legs crossed beneath him,

and lost in meditation; at intervals, one and another of these rising, and without even a look round, moving quietly away in the direction of the common though as yet invisible goal—all this wore an air of quiet elevation, and seemed to bear witness that here events were taking place of so unusual, indeed, of so sacred a character, that no power on earth might dare place itself in opposition to them, ay, that love itself, if it should raise a hostile voice, would lose its every divine right.

So I moved resolutely forward, and the words addressed to Angulimala by the Master concerning the many generations of men who live and pass away without a Buddha's being in the world, and of the very few even among the contemporaries of a Buddha to whom it is given to hear and to see him—these words sounded in my ears like the ringing of a temple bell, and I felt myself like a favoured one who goes to meet an experience which coming generations will envy her.

When we reached the glade in which the temple ruin stands, a great many people were already assembled, laymen as well as monks. They stood broken up into groups, most of them in the vicinity of the ruin, which rose just opposite to us. Near to the spot where we entered the forest meadow, I noticed a fairly large group of monks, among whom it was impossible to help noticing one who was a very giant, for he towered a full head above the tallest of those who stood beside him.

Then, while we were looking about us to discover whither we could most fitly turn our steps, there came out of the forest, between us and those monks, an old ascetic. His tall figure had such a kingly bearing, and such a cheerful peace radiated from his noble features, that at once the

thought came to me, "I wonder whether this ascetic is not the Sakya son whom men call the Buddha."

In his hand he bore a few Sinsapa leaves, and, turning to the monks of whom I have made mention, he said—

"What think ye, O ye disciples, which are the more numerous, these Sinsapa leaves which I hold in my hand, or the other leaves yonder in the Sinsapa wood?"

And the monks answered—

"The leaves, Lord, which thou dost hold in thy hand are few, and far more numerous are those yonder in the Sinsapa wood."

"So also," said he, who, as I now knew, was the Buddha, "so also, O ye disciples, is that which I have discerned and not declared to you far greater than that which I have declared. And why, O ye disciples, have I not declared all things to you? Because it would in no wise profit you, because it would not minister to the holiness of your walk, would not lead to your turning away from earthly things, not to the destruction of all lust, not to the change which is the end of all change, not to peace, not to Nirvana."

"So that foolish old man was right after all!" exclaimed Kamanita.

"What old man?" asked Vasitthi.

"That ascetic with whom, as I related to thee, I spent the night, the last of my earthly life, in the suburb of Rajagriha, in the hall of the potter. He would insist on expounding the doctrine of the Master to me, and, as I readily perceived, did not especially succeed. But he manifestly quoted many genuine sayings, and among these, even to the very words, what thou hast just told me—he even gave the name of the place correctly, and moved

me deeply as he did so. But had I imagined that thou hadst been present, then I should have been yet more deeply affected."

"He was very probably among those who were there," said Vasitthi; "in any case, he seems to have given thee an accurate report. And the Master further added—

"And what, ye disciples, have I declared to you? I have declared to you what Suffering is, what the Origin of Suffering is, what the End of all Suffering is, what the Path that leads to the End of all Suffering is—all this have I declared to you. Therefore, ye disciples, what I have revealed, that leave revealed; and what I have left unrevealed, that leave unrevealed."

As he uttered these words, he opened his hand, and let the leaves fall. And when one of these, describing gyrations in the air, fluttered down near to me, I took courage, stepped quickly forward, and caught it before it had touched the earth, in that way receiving it, as it were, from the Master's hand. This priceless memorial I concealed in my bosom, a symbol of the short but all-sufficing message communicated to us by the Perfect One from his measureless wealth of knowledge, a symbol from which I was not to be parted till death.

This movement of mine drew the attention of the Master to me. The gigantic monk to whom I have alluded now bowed before him and made a whispered communication, upon which the Master again looked at me and then made a sign to the monk.

The latter now came towards us.

"Approach, noble lady," said the monk,—and I knew at once from the voice that it was Angulimala's,—"the Master will himself receive thy gifts."

We all went forward to within a few paces of the Master

and bowed low, greeting him reverently, with hands folded and held before our foreheads. But I was unable to utter a word.

"Rich are thy gifts, noble lady," said the Master, "and my disciples have few needs. Heirs of truth are they, not heirs of penury. But the Buddhas of past ages also favoured this practice, and gladly accepted the offerings of pious followers, in order that opportunity might be given to these to exercise the virtue of alms-giving.

"For, if created beings knew the fruits of giving as I know them, then, if they had but a handful of rice left, they would not eat of it without giving a portion to one yet poorer than themselves, and the selfish thoughts which darken their spirits would disappear from these. Be thine offering, then, gratefully accepted by the Order of the Buddha—a pure offering. For I call that a pure offering by which the giver is purified and the receiver also. And how does that take place? It takes place, Vasitthi, when the giver is pure in life, noble in heart, and the receiver is pure in life, noble in heart; and when that is the case the giver of the offering is purified and the receiver also. That is, Vasitthi, the purity of the supremely pure offering—of such a one as thou hast brought."

Thereafter, the Master turned to Angulimala—

"Go, my friend, and have these presents placed with the other supplies. But first show our noble guests to seats in front of the temple steps, for from them I shall expound the doctrine to those who are present to-day."

Angulimala bade the servants wait, and called upon us to follow him. First, however, we had all our flowers and also several beautiful carpets handed out to us. Then,

conducted by our stalwart guide, we passed through the rapidly growing crowd, who respectfully made way for us, to the temple.

Here we spread the carpets upon the steps and twined garlands of flowers round about the old weather-worn and crumbling pillars. Then Medini and I picked a whole basketful of roses and strewed the petals upon the carpet at the top of the steps for the Master to stand upon.

Meanwhile the assembled people had grouped themselves in a wide semicircle, the lay-hearers to the left, the monks and nuns to the right, of the temple—the front ranks sitting on the grass. We also now took our places on an overturned pillar, only a few paces from the steps.

There were probably about five hundred people there, yet an all but absolute silence reigned in the whole circle, and no sound was to be heard save the fitful rustling and low whispering of the forest leaves.

XXXVI

BUDDHA AND KRISHNA

The setting sun shot its sheaf of rays through the openings between the trunks, consecrating, it seemed, with a heavenly benediction, the silent and expectant company assembled in the depths of the forest; and, between the tree-tops, roseate evening clouds looked down in ever-growing luminousness, as though, floating out from the blue ether, a second assembly were gathering, recruited from the hosts of heaven.

The temple building, with its black and crumbling walls, absorbed this farewell blaze of sunshine, as a broken-down old man quaffs a rejuvenating draught. Beneath the magic of the red-gold lights and the purple shadows, its masses grew wonderfully animated. The jagged edges of the fluted pillars sparkled, the corners flashed, the snails curled themselves up, the stone waves foamed with froth of gold, the carven foliage grew. Along the stair-like projections of the lofty substructure, round about plinths and capitals, on the beams, and on the terraces of the dome-like roof — everywhere — a confused medley of strange and mystical forms seemed to be in motion. Gods came forth in a halo of glory, many-headed and many-armed figures with all-too-luxuriant and, often, greatly mutilated limbs, the one stretching out four headless necks, the next waving eight stumps of arms. Breasts and hips of the voluptuously limbed

goddesses were unveiled as these came swaying nearer, their round faces tilted under the burden of the towering, diamond-bespangled head-gear, a sunny smile on their full, sensuous lips. The snake-like extremities of the demons writhed and twisted, the wings of the griffins were spread for flight, grim masks of monsters, showing their whetted teeth, grinned horribly, human bodies swarmed, and, in and through the mad throng, to and fro, now over, now under, elephants' trunks, the heads of horses, and the horns of bulls, stags' antlers, crocodiles' jaws, monkeys' muzzles, and tigers' throats reeled in a tangled mass.

That was no longer an edifice decorated with statuary. These were statues come to life, which, breaking through the ban laid upon them by the building, had freed themselves from its solid mass and would hardly tolerate it further, even as a support. A whole world seemed to have wakened up out of its stony sleep, and, with its thousands of figures, to be pressing forward in order to listen—to listen to the man who stood at the top of the steps, surrounded and overshadowed by the whole swarm of them, the long hanging folds of his robe bathed in a golden glow—he, the living, the one perfectly calm soul amid this restless and delusive life of the lifeless.

It now seemed as if the stillness of the assembly grew deeper; yes, it even seemed to me that the very leaves of the trees ceased to whisper.

And the Master began to speak.

He spoke of the temple, on the steps of which he stood, and where our ancestors had for hundreds of years worshipped Krishna in order to be inspired by the example of his heroic life to heroic action and suffering here on earth, to be strengthened by his favour, and finally to pass

through the gates of death to his paradise of pleasure, and to enjoy the raptures of heaven there. But now, we, their descendants, had come together to hear from the lips of a perfect Buddha the words of truth, in order to learn how to lead a pure and perfect life, and, finally, by a complete victory over desire for the fleeting and perishable, to reach the end of all suffering, to reach Nirvana. In this way he, the Buddha, the Fully Awakened One, completed the work of the dreaming god; in this way we, grown up, completed what our ancestors had, with the noble enthusiasm of childhood, begun.

"There ye see," he said, "how a gifted artist of days long past has reproduced in stone Krishna's combat with the elephant;" and he pointed to a huge relief which lay almost at my feet, one corner pressed into the turf, the other supported by a half-buried capital. The last glow of the setting sun lingered caressingly on the moss-covered relic, and, in its mild radiance, one could still clearly recognise the group—that of a youth setting his foot upon the head of a fallen elephant, one of whose tusks he breaks off.

And the Master now related how the King of Mathura, the horrible tyrant Kamsa, after he had invited Krishna to a prize contest at his court, secretly ordered his mahout to drive his wildest war elephant out of the stables upon the unsuspecting youth, and that, too, at the very entrance to the scene of the coming struggles. And how the latter slew the monster, and, to the terror of the king, entered the arena bespattered with blood, and with the tusk he had broken off in his hand.

"But upon the Master also," he added, continuing his discourse, "enemies had hounded a savage elephant. And at the sight of the monster dashing down upon him, the

Master was seized with pity. For blood streamed down the creature's breast, and the wounds from the lances of his tormentors were many. But his pity deepened as he saw there before him, not merely a wounded, but a hapless, creature who had become the prey to a passion of blind rage—a creature dowered by nature with courage and enormous strength, but gifted with little understanding, and robbed of that little by the cruelty of base men, who had roused it to the condition of madness in which it was actually being brought to destroy a Buddha—a poor, wild, dazed brute, and not likely, save with great difficulty and after endlessly long wanderings, to attain a propitious human existence, and to enter the path that leads to salvation.

"Filled full of pity as he was, the Master could feel no fear; and no thought of his own danger arose within him. For he reasoned thus: 'If I should succeed in casting even the faintest ray of light into this tempestuous darkness, such a spark of light would gradually grow; and when this creature, led by its glimmer, arrived at human existence, then it would find on earth the doctrine of the Master it had once killed, and this teaching would help it to salvation.'

"Possessed by this thought, the Master halted in the middle of the road, raised his hand with a calming gesture, looked lovingly at the raging creature, and uttered gentle words, the sound of which reached its savage heart. The giant beast stopped in his charge, rocked his mountain of a head irresolutely back and forth, and, instead of the thundering peal heard from him a moment before, gave vent to one or two almost timid trumpet-calls. At the same time he tossed his trunk into the air and swung it in every direction as if seeking something—like the wounded

elephant in the forest when he has lost the spoor of his hidden enemy and hopes to scent it again—and, in very truth, he had been mistaken in his enemy. Finally, he came slowly to within a few paces of the Master and bent his knee, as he was accustomed to do before his owner when the latter wished to mount him. And, followed by the tamed elephant, the Master, to the confusion of his enemies, entered the park to which he had just been on the way.

"In this way," so the Buddha ended his parallel, "does the Master take up Krishna's battle with the elephant, spiritualise, refine, complete it."

While I listened to this tale, how could I do other than think of Angulimala, the most savage of the savage, who but yesterday wished to destroy the Buddha, and had not only been tamed, but converted, by the irresistible might of the Buddha's personality, so that I now saw him devoutly sitting opposite to me in the ranks of the monks—changed, even in his outward appearance, to another. And so it seemed that the words of the Master were most particularly addressed to me, as the only person—at all events, outside the circle of the monks—who knew of this matter, and could understand the significance of his speech.

The Master now went on to speak of Krishna as the "Sixteen-thousand-one-hundredfold Bridegroom," for as such had our ancestors worshipped him here, and again I had a feeling as though secret reference were being made to me, for I remembered that, on the night of our last meeting, the hateful old witch had called the divine hero by this name, which I did not hear without a certain fluttering of the heart. With a gentle dash of humour the Master then related how Krishna took possession of all the treasures which he had carried off from the castle of the demon king,

Naraka. "And on one auspicious day," it is said, "he married all the virgins, and all at the same moment, appearing to each one individually as her husband. Sixteen thousand one hundred was the number of the women, and in just so many separate forms did the god incorporate himself, so that each maiden's thought was, "Me only hath the Master chosen."

"And, in like fashion," the Master continued, "when I declare the doctrine, and before me there sits an assembly of several hundred monks and nuns, and lay disciples of both sexes, listening, then each one of all these listeners thinks, 'To me alone hath the ascetic Gautama declared this doctrine.'

"For upon the individual nature of each seeker after peace do I direct the power of my spirit; I calm it, fill it with harmony, make it to be at one with itself.

"This I do always, and in this way I take the sixteen-thousand-one-hundredfold bridal state of Krishna, spiritualise it, refine it, complete it."

Of course it at once appeared to me as though the Master had read my thoughts, and had given me a secret reproof, in order that I might not entertain the delusion that I occupied a privileged position, and so become the victim of a pernicious vanity.

And now the Buddha went on to speak of how, according to the belief of our forefathers, Krishna, although himself the Supreme God, the Upholder and Preserver of the whole world, yet, moved by pity for all created beings, suffered a portion of his own divine personality to descend from high heaven, and to be born as a man among men. Passing to himself, the Master said that when, after ardent struggle, he had made perfect enlightenment, the blessed and abiding certainty of salvation, his own, the desire

came to him to remain in the enjoyment of this blessed serenity, and not to declare the doctrine to others. "'For this pleasure-loving generation'—thus I reasoned—'will hardly comprehend the freeing itself from all the forms assumed by existence, the quenching of all desire for life, the blotting out of all delusion; and, for the declaring of the doctrine, my only reward will be labour and vexation of spirit.' Thus did my nature incline to uncommunicativeness, and not to the proclamation of the doctrine. Then I looked with seeing eyes yet once again upon the world. And as in a lotus pond one sees some lotus flowers which develop in the waters and remain under the surface, others which force their way to the surface and float there, and, finally, others which rise above the waters and stand free from all contact with them; so also in this world I saw beings of a low type, beings of a noble type, and beings of the noblest type. And I reasoned thus: 'If they do not hear the doctrine they will lose their way: these will understand the doctrine.' And out of pity for these beings I decided to resign for a time the undisturbed possession of the blessed calm of Nirvana, and to proclaim the doctrine to the world.

"Thus does a perfect Buddha take up Krishna's coming down from heaven and becoming man, give it inward force, illumine, and complete it."

As he said this, there came to me a feeling of unspeakable joy; for I knew that the Buddha numbered me with the lotus flowers that had risen to the surface of the water, and that I, by his help, would one day raise myself above it, and would stand free, unsullied by material things.

Further, the Master told us of those heroic deeds of Krishna, by which he had freed the world from monsters

and wicked rulers, and had added to the happiness of all created beings. How he had vanquished the water serpent Koliya, slain the bull-shaped demon Aristha, destroyed the ravaging monsters Dhenuka and Kishi, and the demon prince Naraka, had overcome and killed the villainous kings Kamsa and Paundraka, and other bloody tyrants who were the terror of helpless human beings, and had thus ameliorated in many a way the distressful fate of man.

But he, the Master, did not combat the foes that assailed men from without, but the monsters in their own hearts—greed, hate, insanity, love of self, the desire for pleasure, the thirst for the things that pass away; and he freed humanity, not from this or that evil, but from suffering.

Then the Blessed One spoke of suffering which everywhere and always follows life like its shadow. And I felt as though some one with gentle hand lifted the load of pain my love had brought me, bore it away, and cast it into the great maelstrom of suffering, where, in the general whirl, it disappeared from view. In my inmost soul, and deeply, did I feel that I had no right to enduring happiness where all suffer. I had enjoyed my happiness; it was born, had unfolded itself, and had passed, just as the Buddha taught that everything in this world comes from some source, and, after its time is fulfilled, must—sooner or later—again pass away. This very transitoriness, in which the unreality of every individual thing veiled itself, was, he told us, the final, the unavoidable source of suffering—unavoidable so long as the desire for existence was not uprooted—so long as it continued to flourish luxuriantly and for ever to give rise to something new. And as each individual is, from the very

fact of his existence, accessory to the suffering of the world, I should now be obliged—or so it seemed to me—if I had been spared pain, to feel myself doubly guilty, and to be filled with a desire to bear my part also.

I was no longer able to bewail my own lot; on the contrary, as I listened to the Master's words, the thought awoke in me, "Oh, that all created beings were no longer obliged to suffer! that this holy man might so succeed in his work of salvation, that all—all—purified from sin and enlightened, might reach the end of all suffering."

And the Master spoke also of this end of suffering and of the world, of the overcoming of every form of existence, of salvation in an even state of mind void of all desire, of the blotting out of all delusion, of Nirvana—strange, wonderful words telling of the only island in all this troubled sea of birth on whose rocky shore the breakers of death dash in impotent foam, and over to which the doctrine of the Perfect One sailed like a trusty ship. And he spoke of that blessed place of peace, not as one speaks who relates to us what he has heard from others—from priests—and also not as a song maker who lets his fancy rove, but like one who communicates what he has himself experienced and seen.

Much he said, it is true, in the course of it, which I, untaught woman, did not understand, and which would not have been easily understood by even the most learned of men.

Many things I was not able to reconcile; for here existence and non-existence were, at one and the same time, not life, and yet still less lifelessness. But I felt in heart

like one who hears a new song utterly unlike any other he has ever heard, a song of which he is able to catch but a few words, yet the music of which penetrates his heart, telling him everything. And what music! Notes of such crystal purity that all other sounds when compared with it must seem to the listener like empty noise, strains bringing greetings from so far away, from so far above the spheres, that a new and undreamt-of longing is awakened, of which one felt that it can never be stilled by anything earthly or earth-like, and which, if unsatisfied, will never pass away.

Meanwhile night had come down. The pale light of the moon, as it rose behind the temple, threw shadows from the latter right across the whole width of the forest glade. The form of the speaker was all but undistinguishable. These more than human words appeared to come forth from the sanctuary itself that had swallowed again into its mass of shadow all the thousand wild and tangled, life-simulating forms, and now towered upward in simple but imposing lines, a monument of all terrestrial and celestial life.

My hands folded about my knees, I sat there listening and looking up to the heavens, where great stars glittered over the dark tree-tops, and the heavenly Gunga lay extended like a river of light. Then I remembered the hour when we both, at that same spot, solemnly raised our hands to it, and mutually swore by its silver floods which feed these lotus lakes, that we would meet here again in the Paradise of the West—in a heaven of pleasure like to that of Krishna, of which the Master had just spoken, as of the place which the faithful strove to reach.

And as I thought of it, my heart grew sad; but I could trace no desire in myself for such a life in Paradise, for

a shimmer of something infinitely higher had shone in my eyes.

And without disappointment, without anything of the painful emotion he feels whose dearest hopes are shattered, I caught the words of the Master—

"To be born is to die; all-destroying, oblivion's breath holds sway;
As in gardens of Earth, flowers in Paradise fade, and pass away."

XXXVII

THE BLOSSOMS OF PARADISE WITHER

"YES, my friend," added Vasitthi, "I heard those words, which appear so destructive of all hope to you, without disappointment, as I now without pain, and indeed even with joy, perceive how, round about us here, the truth of these words is established in what we see taking place."

During Vasitthi's narration, the process of decay had gone on, slowly but ceaselessly, and there could no longer be the least doubt but that all these beings and their surroundings sickened to their fall and complete dissolution.

The lotus flowers had already shed more than half their crown-petals, and the waters sparkled but sparingly forth from between these gay-coloured little vessels which were set trembling every other instant as a fresh one fell. On their flower-thrones, divested of all adornment now, sat the once-happy inhabitants of the Paradise of the West, in positions more or less indicative of utter breakdown. The head of one hung down upon his breast, that of another sideways on his shoulder, and a shiver as of fever ran through them every time that an icy blast shook the already thinned tops in the groves, causing blossoms and leaves to rain to earth. Woefully subdued, and more and more frequently interwoven with painful discords, sounded the music of the heavenly genii; and with it were blent deep sighs and anxious groans.

All that had been so luminous—the. faces and robes of the blest and of the genii, no less than the clouds and flowers—all gradually lost brightness, and a blue twilight haze appeared to weave its threads about the distances. The fresh fragrance of the flowers too, that had formerly been as a vitalizing breath to everything, had gradually become a soporific odour, at once distressing to the respiratory organs, and stupefying to the senses.

Kamanita indicated the things about him with a tired movement of the hand.

"How can one possibly feel pleasure in such a sight, Vasitthi?"

"For this reason, my friend, it is possible to feel pleasure in such a sight, that if all this were lasting and did not pass away, there would be nothing higher. But now there is something higher; for this does pass, and beyond there is that which knows neither decay nor genesis. Just that it is that the Master calls 'joy in the transient'; and for that reason he says: 'If thou hast discerned the dissolution of all created things, then thou dost know the uncreated.'"

At these confident words, Kamanita's features grew animated, as a flower that is withering for want of water revives beneath the falling rain.

"Blessings on thee, Vasitthi! For my salvation wast thou given me. Yes, I feel it. We have erred but in this one particular—our longings did not aim high enough. We desired for ourselves this life in a paradise of flowers. And flowers must, assuredly, in accordance with their nature, wither. Everlasting, however, are the stars; according to eternal laws they keep their courses. And look there, Vasitthi; while all else shows the pale traces of decay, that little river—a tributary of the heavenly

Gunga—flows into our lake, its water just as starlike in its purity and just as plentiful as ever, and all because it comes from the world of stars. One who should succeed in entering into existence again among the gods of the stars, would be raised above the sphere of mortality."

"Why should we not be able to succeed in that?" asked Vasitthi. "For I have certainly heard of monks who fixed heart and mind upon returning to existence in the kingdom of the hundred-thousandfold Brahma. And even now it cannot be too late, if the ancient words of that song of the Sublime One[1] be true—

"'Longings for a future being, filling heart and brain at death,
To the life that follows this one, will give character and breath.'"

"Vasitthi? thou givest me that more than human courage! Come then, let us turn our whole thoughts to the entering into existence again in the kingdom of the hundred-thousandfold Brahma."

Scarcely had they come to this decision when a violent hurricane swept through the groves and over the lakes. Blossoms and leaves were whirled away in heaps; the beings throned on the lotus flowers cowered before the storm, and, moaning, drew their robes closer about their trembling limbs.

But like one who, all but suffocated in the close and perfume-laden atmosphere of a room, breathes deep and feels himself a new man when the fresh sea-breezes, salt-laden from the floods of the ocean, blow in through the open window, so it was with Kamanita and Vasitthi when a breath of that absolute purity came streaming towards them which they had once inhaled on the shores of the heavenly Gunga.

[1] Bhagavad Gîta.

"Dost thou notice aught ?" asked Vasitthi.

"A greeting from the Gunga. And listen, she calls," said Kamanita.

As he spoke, the wailing death-song of the genii was silenced by the solemn, thundering sounds they both remembered.

"Good, that we already know the way," exulted Vasitthi. "Art thou still afraid, my friend ?"

"How should I fear ? Come !"

And like a pair of birds that dash from the nest and fly in the teeth of the wind, so they flew thence.

All stared after them, amazed that there were still beings there who had the strength and courage necessary to flight.

But as they thus breasted the storm, there arose a whirlwind behind them which bereft everything of leaf and soul alike, and made an end of the slowly fading life of Sukhavati.

Soon they had reached the forest of palms, soon passed over it. Before them the silvery expanse of the Stream of the Universe stretched far away to the blue-black border of the heavens.

They swept out over its floods, and were instantly caught in the current of air prevailing there, and borne away with the swiftness of the tempest.

Overpowered by the speed of their flight and by the frightful crash, as it seemed of thunder mingled with the ringing of bells, their senses forsook them.

XXXVIII

IN THE KINGDOM OF THE HUNDRED-THOUSANDFOLD BRAHMA

AND Kamanita and Vasitthi entered again into existence in the kingdom of the hundred-thousandfold Brahma as the gods of a double star.

The luminous astral substance to which Kamanita's spiritual essence was united symmetrically enveloped the heavenly body which was animated by his strength and guided by his will. By the exercise of his will-power the star in the first place revolved on its own axis; and this motion was his own individual life, his self-love.

Further, Kamanita was reflected in Vasitthi's lustre, and in turn reflected hers. Exchanging rays, they circled around one common point, where their rays accumulated. This point was their mutual love; the circling was therefore their love-life. And that, in its course, they reflected one another—that was the joy of their love.

Gifted with sight on every side, each was able to look, at one and the same moment, towards every point of unending space. And everywhere they saw countless star-gods like themselves, the flashing of whose rays they caught and returned. Of these, there was, first, a number who formed with them a separate group; next, other groups which, with their own, formed a whole world-system; further, other systems which formed themselves into a chain of systems; and beyond these yet other chains,

and rings of chains, and spheres of chain-rings. And Kamanita and Vasitthi now guided their binary-star in harmonious flight among the other stars and double stars of their group, as in a well-arranged roundelay, neither coming too near to their neighbours nor yet removing to too great a distance, while all the time, by a certain unspoken sympathy, informing one another of the exact direction and the just degree of motion. But at the same time, as it were, a common will was formed, which guided their whole group into the motion of the groups of their system, that then again, in turn, joined in the motion of other similar groups.

And this sympathy with the vast swaying rhythmic motion of the world-bodies, this universal and unceasing, this manifold interchange of movement—this was their relation to the universe, their outer life, their all-embracing and all-permeating charity.

That, however, which was here harmony of movement appeared to the gods of the air, who had their places beneath the star-gods, to be harmony of sound. By participation in its enjoyment, the heavenly genii, in the fields of Paradise, imitate these harmonies in their joyous melodies; and because a weak and far-off echo of these sometimes pierces to our earth—so weak that it can only be caught by the spiritual ears of the Enlightened—the seers talk mysteriously of the harmony of the spheres, and the great masters of music reproduce what they, in their ecstasy, have overheard—and this is the greatest delight of the children of men. But as the reality is to its ever dimmer-growing reflection, so is, to the rapture of human beings over notes and chords and melodies, the joy in existence of the gods of the stars. For just this is their joy of life, their joy in existence.

All these movements, however, these vast roundelays of the world-systems, had for their centre a single object—the hundred-thousandfold Brahman throned in the midst of the universe; he whose immeasurable brightness permeated all the gods of the stars, and to whom they in turn flashed back that radiance, like so many mirrors of his splendour; he whose exhaustless strength, like a never-failing spring, imparted motion to all of them, and in whom, in turn, all their motion became centred.

And this was their being, filled with all the fullness of the Brahma, their community with the highest god, their blessedness, their prayerfulness, their bliss.

But if they had in Brahma the central point about which everything else was collected, yet this Brahma-world was also, though boundless, nevertheless, in a sense, limited. As the prescient eye of man, even in far-distant ages, discovered a "zodiac" in the dome of heaven, so the gods of the stars here saw untold zodiacs described in and about one another, weaving throughout the spheres pictures in which the most distant groups of stars resolved themselves into luminous figures. Now intertwined so that one star shone as an inherent part of several pictures, again flashing in lonely exclusiveness, objects appeared there, astral forms of all the beings that live and move on the worlds, or between these, abiding pictures of the original forms of all that, wrapping itself in the great elements, ceaselessly comes into being and passes away in the changeful river of life.

And this beholding of the original forms was their knowledge of the worlds.

But because, being all-seeing, they were able without having to look away from *this* in order to see that, and, without even the flutter of an eyelid, to behold at one glance the

unity of God and the multiplicity of the world-beings—the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the worlds became for them one and the same thing. If, however, a human being turns his gaze upon the divine unity, then the many forms of the changing universe would escape him; and, on the other hand, were he to look upon these, he could no longer hold in view the unity of God. They, however, saw, at one and the same moment, centre and circle; and, for that reason, their knowledge was unified knowledge, never unstable, and a prey to no doubt.

Throughout this whole luminous Brahma-world, time now flowed on silently and imperceptibly. As in a perfectly clear stream, which glides quietly and smoothly along, and whose waters are neither obstructed nor broken by any resistance, there is not the least movement to be perceived, so here, the passage of time was just as imperceptible, because it experienced no resistance from the rise or fall of thought and feeling.

This imperceptible passage of time was their eternity. And this eternity was a delusion. So also was all that it embraced—their knowledge, their godliness, their joy in existence, their world-life, their love-life, and their own individual life—all was steeped in delusion—was overlaid with the colour of delusion.

XXXIX

THE DUSK OF THE WORLDS

There came a day when a feeling of discomfort, the consciousness of a void, arose in Kamanita.

And involuntarily his thoughts turned to the hundred-thousandfold Brahma, as the source of all fullness. But the feeling was not thereby removed. On the contrary, it increased almost perceptibly with the passing of the years, from one decade of thousands to another.

For from that awakened feeling, the tranquil stream of time, which had hitherto flowed imperceptibly by, encountered resistance as from an island suddenly risen in its midst, on whose rocky cliffs it began to break in foam as it flowed past. And at once there arose a "before" and an "after" the rapids.

And it seemed to Kamanita as though the hundred-thousandfold Brahma did not now shine quite as brightly as formerly.

After he had observed the Brahma, however, for five millions of years, it seemed to Kamanita as though he had now observed him for a long time without reaching any certainty.

And he turned his attention to Vasitthi.

Upon which he became aware that she also was observing the Brahma attentively.

Which filled him with dismay. And with dismay came

feeling; with feeling, came thought; with thought, the speech for its utterance.

And he spoke.

"Vasitthi, dost thou also see it? What is happening to the hundred-thousandfold Brahma?"

After a hundred thousand years, Vasitthi answered—

"What is happening to the hundred-thousandfold Brahma is that his brightness is diminishing."

"It seems so to me also," said Kamanita, after the passage of a like period of time. "True, that can be but a passing phenomenon. And yet I must confess that I am astonished at the possibility of any change whatever in the hundred-thousandfold Brahma."

After a considerable time—after several millions of years—Kamanita spoke again—

"I do not know that I am not perhaps dazzled by the light. Dost thou, Vasitthi, notice that the brightness of the hundred-thousandfold Brahma is again increasing?"

After five hundred thousand years, Vasitthi answered—

"The brightness of the hundred-thousandfold Brahma does not increase, but steadily decreases."

As a piece of iron that, taken white-hot from the smithy fire, very soon after becomes red-hot, so the brightness of the hundred-thousandfold Brahma had now taken on a red shimmer.

"I wonder what that may signify," said Kamanita.

"That signifies, my friend, that the brightness of the hundred-thousandfold Brahma is in process of being extinguished."

"Impossible, Vasitthi, impossible! What would then become of all the brightness and the splendour of this whole Brahma-world?"

"He had that in mind when he said—

"'Upward to heaven's sublimest light, life presses—and decays.
Know, that the future will even quench the glow of Brahma's rays.'"

After the short space of but a few thousand years came Kamanita's anxious and breathless question—

"Who ever uttered that frightful, that world-crushing sentence?"

"Who other than he, the Master, the Knower of Men, the Perfect One, the Buddha."

Then Kamanita became thoughtful. For a considerable length of time he pondered upon these words, and recalled many things. Then he spoke—

"Once already, Vasitthi, in Sukhavati, in the Paradise of the West, thou didst repeat a saying of the Buddha which was fulfilled before our eyes. And I remember that thou didst then faithfully report to me a whole speech of the Master's in which that saying occurred. This world-crushing utterance was not, however, contained in it. So thou hast then, Vasitthi, heard yet other speeches by the Master?"

"Many, my friend, for I saw him daily for more than half a year; yes, I even heard the last words he uttered."

Kamanita gazed upon her with wonder and reverence. Then he said—

"Then thou art, and just for that reason, as I believe, the wisest being in the whole Brahma-world. For all these star-gods round about us are aghast, shine with a wavering light, flicker, and blink; and even the hundred-thousand-fold Brahma himself has become restless, and from his dulled radiance dart forth from time to time what seem to me flashes of anger. But thou dost give a steady light as of a lamp in a sheltered spot. And that also is a sign of dis-

turbance that the movement of these heavenly bodies has now become audible—the thundering crashes and mighty accents, as of the distant ringing of bells, proceeding from this Brahma-world, which once reached us on the shores of the heavenly Gunga, far from here, in Paradise, we now hear on all sides. That indicates that the harmony of motion is disturbed, that disunion and separation of the world-forces is taking place. For it has been well said that, 'Where want is, there noise is; but abundance is tranquil.' And so I do not doubt but that thou art right. Come then, Vasitthi, while, round about us, this Brahma-world expires and becomes a prey to destruction, relate to me thy memories of the Perfect One, in order that I may become composed as thou art. Tell me all of thy life, for it may well be that we are united for the last time in a place where it will be possible for spirit to commune with spirit of things that have happened, and it still remains a mystery how Angulimala appeared in Ujjeni, although his becoming an ascetic has been fully explained to me. But his appearance at that time gave the impulse to my pilgrimage and was the reason why I did not take to downward paths, but instead rose again in the Paradise of the West, there to climb by thy help to this highest heaven, where throughout immeasurable ages we have enjoyed the lives of gods. I have an idea, however, that the impulse which led to my becoming a pilgrim went out from thee. Now the truth about this I should like to learn; but also, and before all things else, how it came about that thou, for my salvation, didst enter again into existence in Paradise, and not in some far higher place of bliss."

And while from one hundred thousand years to another, the growing dimness of the Brahma-light became ever more apparent and the gods of the stars grew ever paler;

While these flickered and spluttered with more and more irregularity, and from the duller-growing circle of fire around the Brahma, vast fingers of flame shot forth and swept hither and thither throughout the whole of space, as if the god with a hundred giant arms were seeking the invisible foe who was besetting him ;

While, owing to the disturbed movements of the heavenly bodies, whirlwinds arose which rent whole systems of stars out the kingdom of the Brahma, and into their places rushed a wave of darkness from the mighty void, as the sea dashes in where the ship has sprung a leak ;

And while, at other points, systems crashed into one another and a universal conflagration broke out, with explosions which hurled sheaves of shooting-stars down into the fiery throat of the Brahma ;

While the thunder of the harmonies as they broke down and crashed into one another—the death-rattle of the music of the spheres—rolled and re-echoed with ever-increasing fearfulness from one quarter of the heavens to another—

Vasitthi, untroubled, and speaking in measured language, related to Kamanita her last earthly experiences.

XL

IN THE GROVE OF KRISHNA

AFTER that first evening I neglected no opportunity of visiting the Krishna grove, and of becoming more deeply initiated into the doctrine, by the words of the Master or of one of his great scholars.

During the absence of my husband, the fear of the citizens of Kosambi because of the robber Angulimala grew from day to day. For the very reason that nothing was heard of fresh deeds of his, fantasy was stirred. Suddenly a report was spread that Angulimala intended to fall upon the Krishna grove one evening and carry off the citizens assembled there, and not only these, but even the Buddha himself. That raised the already excited popular feeling almost to the point of tumult. People declared that if evil should come to the Master from villainous robber hands at the gates of Kosambi, then the anger of the gods would be visited on the whole town.

Enormous crowds of people swept through the streets, and, collecting in front of the royal palace, demanded threateningly that King Udena should avert this calamity and render Angulimala incapable of further mischief.

On the following day Satagira returned.

He at once overwhelmed me with praise for my good advice, to which alone he was disposed to attribute his having come safely home. Vajira, his second wife, who, with her little son on her arm, appeared to welcome him,

was dealt with very summarily: "he had matters of importance to talk over with me."

When we were again alone, he forthwith began, to my unspeakable discomfort, to talk of his love, of how he had missed me on the way, and with what joy he had looked forward to this hour of reunion.

I was on the point of telling him about the troubles in the town, in order to change the current of his thoughts, when the servants announced the chamberlain, who had come to summon Satagira to the king.

After about an hour he returned—another being. Pale, and with perturbed countenance, he came in to me, flung himself down on a low seat, and exclaimed that he was the most wretched man in the whole kingdom, a fallen great one, soon to be a beggar, mayhap even exposed to imprisonment or exile, and that the cause of all his misfortune was his boundless love for me, which I didn't even return. After I had repeatedly urged him to tell me what had happened, he calmed himself sufficiently to give me an account of what had taken place in the palace, accompanying the recital by many outbursts of despair, all the while ceaselessly mopping his forehead, from which the sweat-drops ran trickling down.

The king had received him very ungraciously, and, without desiring to hear anything of the village quarrel which he had settled, had ordered him, with threats, to acknowledge the whole truth about Angulimala, which Satagira was now obliged to confess to me also, without having the smallest idea that I was already so well informed on the subject. For the rest, he only saw in it a proof of his "boundless love" for me, and spoke of my love for thee lightly, as of a foolish youthful sentimentality which would, in any case, have assuredly led to nothing.

The matter had come to the king's ears in the following way.

During Satagira's absence, the police had succeeded in tracking down Angulimala's accomplice, who had, in the course of a severe examination, given the assurance that the robber in question was really Angulimala himself, that the latter did not die under torture at that former time, as the Minister had always asserted, but had escaped; he had also confessed Angulimala's intended attack on the Krishna grove. His majesty was naturally incensed in the last degree, first at Satagira's having allowed the execrable robber to escape, and then at his having cheated the whole of Kosambi and its king with the false head he had set up. He wouldn't listen to any words of defence, or even of excuse. If Satagira didn't within three days render Angulimala incapable of further mischief—as the people so stormily demanded—then all the consequences of the royal displeasure would be visited upon him with the utmost rigour.

After Satagira had related the whole tale, he threw himself weeping upon the seat, tore his hair, and behaved like one distraught.

"Be comforted, my husband," I said. "Follow my counsel, and not in three days, but before this day is over, thou shalt again be in possession of the royal favour; yes, and not only so, but it shall shine upon thee even more brightly than before."

Satagira sat up and looked at me as one might gaze upon some strange natural phenomenon.

"And what, then, is this counsel of thine?"

"Return to the king and persuade him to betake himself to the Sinsapa wood beyond the city gates. There let him seek the Lord Buddha at the ancient temple, and ask counsel from him. The rest will follow of itself."

"Thou art a wise woman," said Satagira. "In any case, thy counsel is very good, for that Buddha is said to be the wisest of all men. Although it can hardly have such good results for me as thou dost imagine, I shall nevertheless make the attempt."

"For the results," I replied, "I shall answer with my honour."

"I believe thee, Vasitthi!" he exclaimed, springing up and seizing my hand. "How were it possible not to believe thee? By Indra! thou art a wonderful woman; and I now see how little I was mistaken when, in my yet inexperienced youth, as though obeying some instinct, I chose thee alone from amid the rich bevy of Kosambi's maidens, and did not suffer myself to be diverted from my love by thy coldness."

The heat with which he poured forth his praise caused me almost to repent that I had given him such helpful counsel; but his very next words brought relief with them, for he now spoke of his gratitude, which would be exhaustless, no matter to what proof I should put it.

"I have but a single petition to make, the granting of which will testify sufficiently to thy gratitude."

"Name it to me at once," he cried, "and if thou dost even demand that I should send Vajira with her son back to her parents, I shall, without hesitation, do thy will."

"My request is a just, no unjust, one. I shall only prefer it, however, when my counsel has proved itself in the fullest degree to be reliable. But hurry now to the palace and win his majesty over to pay this visit."

He returned fairly soon, delighted that he had succeeded in prevailing upon the king to undertake the expedition.

"Not until Udena heard that the counsel came from

thee, and that thou hadst vouched for its success with thine honour, did he consent; for he also thinks great things of thee. Oh, how proud am I of such a wife!"

These and similar speeches, of which in his confident mood there was no lack, were painful enough to me, and would have been more painful still if I had not, throughout the whole matter, had my own secret thoughts to buoy me up.

We betook ourselves at once to the palace, where already preparations were being made for the start.

As soon as the sun's rays had somewhat modified their intensity, King Udena mounted his state elephant, the celebrated Bhaddavatika, which, because she was now very old, was only used on the gravest occasions. We, the chamberlain, the lord of the treasury, and other high dignitaries came after in wagons; two hundred horsemen opening, and the same number bringing up the rear of, the procession.

At the entrance to the wood, the king caused Bhaddavatika to kneel down, and himself dismounted; the others of us left the wagons and betook ourselves in his train, on foot, to the Krishna temple, where the Buddha, who had already been informed of the approaching royal visit, awaited us, surrounded by his disciples.

The king gave the Master a reverential greeting, and, stepping to one side, seated himself. And when we others had also taken our seats, the Perfect One asked—

"What troubles thee, O noble king? Has the King of Benares perhaps, or one of the others of thy royal neighbours, threatened thy land with war?"

"The King of Benares does not, O Reverend One, nor does any one of my royal neighbours threaten me. A robber, sir, lives in my land, named Angulimala, cruel and blood-

thirsty, given to murder and deadly assault, without mercy on man or beast. He makes the villages uninhabitable; the towns, heaps of smoking ruins; the lands, desert wastes. He slays people and hangs their thumbs about his neck. And in the wickedness of his heart he has conceived the plan of falling upon this sacred grove and of carrying thee off, O Master, thee and thy disciples. Beside themselves at the thought of this great danger, my people murmur openly, throng in great crowds around my palace, and demand that I should make this Angulimala incapable of further mischief. That only have I in mind in coming to thee."

"But if thou, noble king, shouldst see Angulimala, with shorn hair and beard, clad in the yellow robe, inimical to murder, weaned from robbery, content with *one* meal, chaste in his walk, virtuous, and altogether noble, what wouldst thou then do with him?"

"We would, O Reverend One, greet him respectfully, rise in his presence and invite him to be seated, would beg him to accept clothing, food, bed, and medicine for possible sickness, and would bestow upon him, as is fitting, protection, shelter, and defence. But how should, O Master, such a troublesome and malignant fellow experience such a virtuous change?"

Now the dread Angulimala was sitting not far from the Master. And the Master raised his right hand and pointed, saying to King Udena as he did so—

"This, noble prince, is Angulimala."

At that, the face of the king grew pale from fear.

But greater by far was the horror on the face of Satagira. His eyes looked as though they would start from their sockets, his hair stood on end, cold sweat dropped from his forehead.

"Woe is me!" he called out. "Yes, that is certainly Angulimala, and I, wretched man, have betrayed my king into putting himself in his power."

At the same time I could see plainly that he only quivered so with fear because he imagined himself to be in the power of his deadly enemy.

"This horrible fellow," he went on, "has deceived us all—has cheated the Master himself and also my all-too-credulous wife, who, like all women, lays much store by such tales of conversion. So we have all walked into the trap."

And his glances wandered hither and thither, as though he descried half a dozen robbers behind every tree. With stuttering voice and trembling hand he adjured the king to seek safety for his precious person in immediate flight.

Then I stepped forward and spoke—

"Calm thyself, my husband! I am in a position to convince thee, as also my noble sovereign, that here no trap has been laid, and that no danger threatens."

And I now related how, talked over by Angulimala, I had, together with him, projected an attack on the life of my husband, and how our plan was frustrated by that very conversion of my ally.

When Satagira heard how near he had been to death, he was obliged to support himself on the arm of the chamberlain, in order not to sink to earth.

I prostrated myself before the king, and begged him to pardon my husband as I had pardoned him, saying that, led away by passion, he had sinned, and in the whole matter had assuredly, though all unconsciously, followed the leading of a higher power that intended to bring to pass before our eyes the greatest of all wonders, so that

now, instead of a robber having to be executed, the robber had become a saint.

And when the king had graciously consented to bestow his undiminished favour again upon my husband, I said to Satagira—

"I have now kept my promise. Keep thou therefore thine also, and fulfil my request, which is, that I may be permitted to enter the Sacred Order of the Buddha."

With a mute inclination of the head, Satagira gave his consent. He, of course, could do no other.

But the king, who was now quite reassured, now approached Angulimala, spoke kindly and deferentially to him, and gave him the assurance of his royal protection.

Then he went again to the Buddha, bowed low before him, and said—

"Wondrous indeed it is, O Reverend One, how thou, the Master, dost tame the untamable. For this Angulimala, whom we could not overcome by either punishment or sword, him thou, O Master, hast overcome without either punishment or sword. And this thrice-sacred grove where such a wonderful thing has transpired shall from this day forth to the end of time belong to the Order of the Holy. Furthermore, I trust the Master will graciously suffer me to erect within its bounds a building for the shelter of the monks, and a second one for that of the nuns."

With a dignified expression of thanks, the Master accepted the royal gift. Then the king took his leave, and went away with his retinue. I, however, remained behind under the protection of the sisters who were present, and the very next day took the vows.

XLI

THE SIMPLE MOTTO

I HAD now become a sister of the Order, and betook myself early in the morning of each day with my alms-bowl to Kosambi, where I went from house to house till the bowl was full—although Satagira would only too willingly have spared me this round of begging.

One day I took my stand at the door of his palace, because the oldest nuns had advised me to subject myself to this trial also. At that moment Satagira appeared just in the gateway, avoided me, however, with a startled glance, and sorrowfully covered his face. Immediately thereafter the house-steward came out weeping to me, and begged that he might be allowed to send me everything I needed daily. But I answered him that it behoved me to obey the rule of the Order.

When I had returned from this errand and had eaten what had been given to me, with which, then, the wretched question of food was settled for the whole day, I was instructed by one of the older nuns, and in the evening I listened, in the assembly, to the words of the Master, or perhaps to those of one of the great disciples, like Sariputta or Ananda. After this was over, however, it often happened that one sister sought the company of another. "Delightful, sister, is the Sinsapa wood; glorious the clear moonlit night; the trees are in full blossom; divine odours, one seems to feel, are being wafted hither and

thither. Come away then, and let us find sister Sumedha. She is a keeper of the Word, a treasure-house of the doctrine. Her discourse may well lend a double glory to this Sinsapa grove." And thereafter we would spend the greater part of such a night in thoughtful converse.

This life in the open air, this constant spiritual activity, and the lively interchange of thought, as a result of which no time was left for sad brooding over personal sorrows or for idle reveries, and finally the elevating and purifying of my whole nature by the power of the truth—all this strengthened both body and mind marvellously. A new and nobler life opened out before, and I enjoyed a calm and cheerful happiness of which a few weeks earlier I could not even have dreamt.

When the rainy season came, the building already stood prepared for the sisters, with a roomy hall for common use, and a separate cell for each one. My husband and several other rich citizens who had relatives among the nuns insisted upon fitting out these abodes of ours with mats and carpets, seats and couches, so that we were richly provided with everything needed to make life reasonably comfortable, and all the more willingly dispensed with its luxury. So this period of enforced seclusion passed quite tolerably in the regular alternation of conversation on religious questions with independent thought and contemplation. Towards evening, however, we betook ourselves, when the weather permitted, to the common hall of the monks to listen to the Master, or else he or one of his great disciples came over to us.

But when the forest, so dear to the heart of the Master, in all its freshness of renewed youth, in its hundredfold richness of leaf and splendour of flower, again invited us to transfer the calm of our solitary contemplation and our

common meetings to its more open shelter, we were met by the sorrowful news that the Master was now preparing to set out on his journey to the eastern provinces. Of course we had not dared to hope that he would always remain in Kosambi; and we also knew how foolish it is to complain of the inevitable, and how little we would show ourselves worthy of the Master if overcome by grief.

So we turned our steps, late in the afternoon, quiet and composed, to the Temple of Krishna, to listen for the last time, perhaps, in years, to the words of the Buddha, and then to bid him farewell.

Standing on the steps, the Master spoke of the transitoriness of all that comes into existence, of the dissolution of everything that has been compounded, of the fleeting nature of all phenomena, of the unreality of all forms whatsoever. And after he had shown that, nowhere in this nor in the other world, far as the desire for existence propagates itself, nowhere in time or space, is there a fixed spot, an abiding place of refuge to be found, he gave utterance to that sentence which thou didst with justice call "world-crushing," and which is now verifying itself round about us—

> "Upward to heaven's sublimest light, life presses—then decays.
> Know, that the future will even quench the glow of Brahma's rays."

We sisters had been told by one of the disciples that after the address we were to go, one by one, to the Master, in order to take leave of him, and to receive a motto which should be a spiritual guide to us in all our future endeavours. As I was one of the youngest, and purposely kept myself in the background, I succeeded in being the last. For I grudged to any other that she should speak to the Master after I did, and I also thought that a longer and less hasty

interview would be more possible if no others waited to come after me.

After I had bent myself reverently, the Master looked at me with a glance which filled my being with light to its innermost depths, and said—

"And to thee, Vasitthi, I give, on the threshold of this ruined sanctuary of the Sixteen-thousand-one-hundred-fold Bridegroom,—to remember me by, and to think of under the leafy shelter of this Sinsapa wood, of which thou dost carry a leaf on, and a shadow in, thy heart,—the following motto: 'Where love is, there is also suffering.'"

"Is that all?" I foolishly asked.

"All, and enough."

"And it will be permitted me, when I have made its meaning fully my own, to make a pilgrimage to the Master and to receive a new sentence?"

"It will be permitted, if thou dost still feel the need of asking the Master."

"How should I not feel the need? Art thou not, O Reverend Master, our refuge?"

"Seek refuge in thyself; take refuge in the doctrine."

"I shall certainly do so. But thou, O Master, art the very self of the disciples; thou art the living doctrine. And thou hast said: 'It will be permitted.'"

"If the way do not tire thee."

"No way can tire me."

"The way is long, Vasitthi! The way is longer than thou dost think for, longer than human thought is able to realise."

"And if the way lead through a thousand lives and over a thousand worlds, no way shall tire me."

"Good then, Vasitthi. Farewell, and remember thy motto."

At this instant the king, followed by a large retinue, approached to take leave of the Master.

I withdrew to the rearmost circle, whence I was a somewhat inattentive spectator of the further proceedings of that last evening. For I cannot deny that I felt somewhat disappointed at the very simple motto the Master had given me. Had not several of the sisters received as their portions from him quite other and weighty mottoes for their spiritual profit: the one, the sentence relating to existence and its causes; another, that relating to non-existence; a third, to the transitoriness of all phenomena? And I therefore thought I had received a slight, which grieved me sorely. When I had reflected further upon the matter, however, the thought occurred to me that the Master had perhaps noticed some self-conceit in me, and wished to stifle it in this way. And I resolved to be on my guard, in order not to be retarded in my spiritual growth by vanity or self-esteem. Soon I should be able to claim praise for having mastered the motto, and might then myself fetch another direct from the lips of the Master.

Full of this assurance, I saw the Buddha depart, early next morning, with many disciples—among these naturally Ananda also, who waited upon the Master and was always about him. He had, in his gentle way, invariably treated me with such special friendliness that I felt I should miss him and his cheering glance greatly, even more than I should the wise Sariputta, who helped me over many a knotty point of doctrine by his keen analysis of all my difficulties and his clear explanations. Now I was left to my own resources.

As soon as I had returned from my alms-gathering, and had eaten my meal, I sought out a stately tree

which stood in the midst of a little forest meadow—the true original of that "mighty tree far removed from all clamour" of which it is said that human beings may sit under it and think.

That I now did, beginning earnestly upon my sentence. When, towards evening, I returned to the common hall I brought with me, as the result of my day's work, a feeling of dissatisfaction with myself, and a dim foreboding of what this sentence might really come to mean. But when, on the following evening, at the close of my period of contemplation, I returned to my cell, I already knew exactly what the Master had in mind when he gave me the motto.

I had certainly believed I was on the straight path to perfect peace, and that I had left my love with all its passionate emotions far behind me. That incomparable master of the human heart, however, had, beyond question, seen that my love was not by any means overcome—that, on the contrary, overawed by the mighty influence of the new life, it had but withdrawn to the innermost recesses of my heart, there to bide its time. And his desire, in directing my attention to it, was that I should induce it to come forth from its lurking-place and so overcome it. And it certainly did come forth, and with such power that I found myself at once in the midst of severe, indeed of distracting, conflicts of soul, and became aware that mine would be no easy victory.

The astonishing information that my loved one had not been killed, and in all probability yet breathed the air of this earth with me, was, it is true, now more than half a year old. But when, owing to the apparition on the terrace, that knowledge rose so suddenly within me, it was at once, as it seemed, inundated by the stormy waves

of feeling it had itself stirred up, and all but went down in its own vortex. Passionate hate, longings for revenge, and malignant broodings succeeded one another in a veritable devil's dance—then came the conversion of Angulimala, the overwhelming impression made upon me by the Buddha, the new life, and the dawn of another and utterly unsuspected world whose elements were born of the destruction of all the elements of the old. Now, however, the first impetuous onrush of the new feeling was over, the great Master of this secret magic had disappeared from my ken, and I sat there alone, my gaze directed on love—on *my* love. Again that marvellous revelation rose clearly before me, and a boundless longing for the distant loved one, who yet sojourned among the living, laid hold upon me.

But was he really, then, among the living still? And did he love me still?

The fearful anxiety and uncertainty of such questions stimulated my longing yet further, and with the subduing of my love, with the loyal acceptance of my motto, I could make no progress. I thought ever of love, and never reached suffering and the origin of suffering.

These ever more hopeless soul struggles of mine did not remain hidden from the other sisters, and I heard, of course, how they spoke of me—

"Vasitthi, formerly the wife of the Minister, whom even the stern Sariputta ofttimes praised for her quick and sure apprehension of even the difficult points of the doctrine, is now unable to master her sentence, and it is so simple."

That discouraged me yet more, shame and despair laid hold upon me, and at last I felt I could bear this state of things no longer.

XLII

THE SICK NUN

AT this time one of the brothers came over to us once a week, and expounded the doctrine.

After some time Angulimala's turn came, and then I did not go into the common hall, but remained lying in my cell, and begged a neighbouring sister to say to Angulimala—

"Sister Vasitthi, O Reverend One, lies sick in her cell, and cannot appear in the assembly. Wilt thou, after the address, go to sister Vasitthi's cell and expound the doctrine to her, the sick one, also?"

And after the address the good Angulimala came to my cell, greeted me deferentially, and sat down by my bed.

"Thou dost see here, brother," I said then, "what no one of us would desire to see—a love-sick nun—and of this my sickness thou thyself art the guilty cause, seeing that thou didst rob me of the object of my love. True, thou hast since brought me to this great physician who heals all life's ills, but even his marvellous powers cannot now influence me further! In his great wisdom he has doubtless recognised this, and has given me a remedy by means of which to bring the fever to a crisis, and so to get rid of the insidious germs of disease at present in my blood. As a result, then, thou dost at this moment see me with a fever of longing raging within. And I wish to remind thee of a promise thou didst once give me—

on that night, I mean, on which thou didst seek to lead me into crime, the execution of which was only frustrated by the interposition of the Master. At that time thou didst promise to go to Ujjeni and bring me certain news of Kamanita, whether he still lived, and how he was. What the robber once promised, that I now demand from the monk. For my desire to know whether Kamanita lives, and how he lives, is such an overmastering one that, until it is gratified, there is room in my soul for no other thought, no other feeling, and it is consequently impossible for me to take even the smallest further step on this our way to salvation. For this reason it becomes thy duty to do this for me, and to quiet my feelings by bringing me some certain information."

After I had thus spoken, Angulimala rose, and said—

"Even as thou dost require from me, Sister Vasitthi," bowed low, and strode out at the door.

Thence he went straight to his cell to get his alms-bowl, and in that same hour left the Sinsapa wood. People generally believed that he had gone on a pilgrimage, following the Master. I alone knew the goal of his journey.

This step once taken, I felt myself grow somewhat calmer, although haunted by a doubt as to whether I should not have given him some greeting or messages to my beloved. But it seemed to me unfitting and profane to use a monk in such a way, as a go-between in love-matters, while, on the other hand, he could perfectly well go to a distant city and give an account of what he had seen there. It would also be something quite other—I said to myself, with secret hope—if he, without being commissioned to do so, and acting on his own judgment, should decide to speak to my loved one of me.

"I will myself go to Ujjeni and bring him here safe and

sound "—these words resounded ever in my inmost heart. Would the monk be likely, then, to redeem the promise of the robber? Why not, if he himself should be convinced that it was necessary for both of us to see and to speak to one another?

And with that came a new thought from whch streamed an unexpected ray of hope that at first dazzled and bewildered me. If my beloved should return, what was then to hinder my resigning from the Order and becoming his wife?

When this question arose in my mind, burning blushes covered my face, which I involuntarily hid in my hands, from fear that some one might just at that moment be observing me. To what hateful misinterpretation would such a course of action not be exposed? Would it not look as though I had regarded the Order of the Buddha simply as a bridge over which to pass from a loveless marriage to a love one? My action would certainly be so construed by many. But, when all was said and done, what could the judgment of others matter to me? And how much better to be a pious lay sister who stood loyally by the Order, than a sister of the Order whose heart lingered without. Yes, even if Angulimala only brought me the information that my Kamanita was still alive, and I could gather from the account of their meeting that my loved one was ever true to me in his faithful heart, then I would be able myself to make a pilgrimage to Ujjeni. And I pictured to myself how I should one morning, as a wandering ascetic, stand at the door of thy house, how thou wouldst with thine own hands fill my alms-bowl, and in doing so wouldst recognise me—and then all the indescribable joy of having found one another again.

To be sure, it was a long journey to Ujjeni, and it was

not seemly for a nun to travel alone. But I did not need to seek long for a companion. Just at this time Somadatta came to a sad end. His passion for the fatal dice had gradually enslaved him, and after gambling away all his substance he drowned himself in the Gunga. Medini, deeply distressed by her loss, now entered the Order. It was perhaps not so much the religious life itself, in all its strict severity, and with its lofty aims, that drew her irresistibly to this sacred grove, as the need she felt to be always in my neighbourhood; for her childlike heart clung with touching fidelity to me. And so I did not doubt that when I revealed my purpose to her, she would go with me to Ujjeni—yes, if need be, to the end of the world. Even already her company in many ways helped to rouse me; while I, on the other hand, by comforting words, softened her genuine grief for the loss of her husband.

As the time approached when Angulimala's return might be expected, I went every afternoon to the south-west edge of the wood, and sat down under a beautiful tree on some rising ground whence I could follow with my eye to a great distance the road he would be obliged to take. I imagined he would reach the goal of his journey towards evening.

I kept watch there for some days in vain, but was quite prepared to be obliged to wait for a whole month. On the eighth day, however, when the sun was already so low that I had to shade my eyes with my hand, I became aware of a form in the distance approaching the wood. I presently saw the gleam of a yellow cloak, and as the figure passed a woodcutter going homeward, it was easy to see that it belonged to a man of unusual stature. It was indeed Angulimala—alone. My Kamanita he had

not "brought with him safe and sound"; but what did that matter? If he could only give me the assurance that my loved one was alive, then I would myself find the way to him.

My heart beat violently when Angulimala stood before me and greeted me with courteous bearing.

'Kamanita lives in his native town in great opulence," he said; "I have myself seen and spoken to him."

And he related to me how he had one morning arrived at thy house, which was a veritable palace; how thy wives had grossly abused him; and how thou didst then thyself come out and drive thy wicked wives into the house, speaking to him friendly and apologetic words.

After he had related everything exactly—just as thou dost know it—he bowed before me, threw his cloak again about his shoulders, and turned round, as though he intended to proceed in that direction, instead of going into the wood. Much astonished, I asked whether he were not going to the hall of the monks.

"I have now faithfully carried out thy charge, and there is no longer anything to prevent my taking my way to the east, in the tracks of the Master, towards Benares and Rajagriha, where I shall find him."

Even as he spoke, this powerful man started off with his long strides, along the edge of the wood, without granting himself the smallest rest.

I gazed after him long, and saw how the setting sun threw his shadow far in front to the crest of the hill on the horizon—yes, to all appearance even farther, as though his longing, in its vehemence, outran him, while I remained behind, like one paralysed, without a goal for longing to which I could send forth even one precious hope.

My heart was dead, my dream dispelled. The hard

ascetic saying, "A slut's corner is domestic life," echoed again and again through my desolate heart. On that splendid Terrace of the Sorrowless, under the open, star-filled, and moonlit heaven, my love had its home. How could I, fool, ever have thought to send it begging to that sluttish domesticity in Ujjeni, in order that quarrelsome women might asperse it with their invective.

I crawled back to my cell with difficulty, to stretch myself on a sick-bed. This sudden annihilation of my feverishly excited hopes was too much for powers of resistance already weakened by months of inner strife. With matchless self-sacrifice, Medini nursed me day and night. But as soon as my spirit, buoyed up by her tender care, was able to raise itself above the pain and inflammation of the fever, the plans I had formed for my journey developed in another direction. Not to the place where I had sent Angulimala, but to the place whither he now, of his own initiative, journeyed, did I want to make my pilgrimage. I would follow in the footsteps of the Master till I overtook him. Was I not done with my sentence? Had I not learned in the deepest sense that, when loves comes, suffering also comes? And so I might, I thought, seek the Buddha, and gain new life from the power of the Holy One in order to be able to press farther forward to the highest goal.

I confided my intention to the good Medini, who at once adopted the unexpected suggestion with wild enthusiasm, and painted, in her childish fantasy, how splendid it would be to roam through exquisite regions, free as the birds of the air when the migratory season calls them to other and far-distant skies.

Of course, for the first thing, we were obliged to wait patiently till I had regained sufficient strength. And

just as that was, to some extent, accomplished, the rainy season, which had begun, imposed a yet longer trial of our patience.

In his last address the Master had spoken thus: "Just as when in the last month of the rainy season, in harvest, the sun, after dispersing and banishing the water-laden clouds, goes up into the sky, and by his radiance frightens all the mists away from the atmosphere, and blazes and shines, so also, ye disciples, does this mode of life, which brings present as well as future good, shine forth, and, by its radiance, frighten away the gossip of common penitents and priests, and blazes and shines."

And when Nature had made this picture a reality round about us, we left the Krishna grove at the gates of Kosambi, and, turning our steps eastward, hurried towards that sun of all holy living.

XLIII

THE PASSING OF THE PERFECT ONE

My lack of strength did not admit of our undertaking long daily journeys, and made it necessary sometimes to take a day for rest, so that only after a pilgrimage of a month did we arrive in Vesali, where, as we knew, the Master had made a considerable stay, but whence he had been gone about six weeks.

A short time before we had learned, in a village in which lived pious followers of the doctrine, that Sariputta and Moggallana had entered into Nirvana. The thought that these two great disciples—the chiefs of the doctrine, as we named them—no longer dwelt on earth, moved me deeply. Of course we all knew well that these great ones, as even the Buddha himself, were merely human beings just as we, but the idea that they could leave us had never arisen in our minds. Sariputta, who had so often in his deliberate way solved difficult questions of doctrine for me, had passed away. He was the disciple in appearance most like the Master, and he stood, as did the Master, in his eightieth year. Was it possible that even the Buddha himself could be approaching the end of his life on earth?

Perhaps the uneasiness which was caused by this fear fanned some smouldering remnant of my past fever again into a blaze. Be that as it may, I arrived in Vesali sick and exhausted. In the town there lived a rich woman,

a follower of the Buddha, who made it her special care to minister in every possible way to the needs of the monks and nuns passing through. When she learned that a sick nun had arrived, she at once sought me out, brought Medini and myself to her house, and tended me there with great solicitude.

Moved by her kindness, I soon gave expression to the fear that was troubling me, and asked whether she thought it possible that the Master, who was of the same age as Sariputta, would also soon leave us?

At that, the pious soul burst into a flood of tears, and, in a voice broken by sobs, exclaimed—

"Ah! Then you don't know yet? Here, in Vesali —about two months ago—the Master himself foretold that he would enter Nirvana in about three months. And just to think! If only Ananda had possessed understanding enough, and had spoken at the right moment, it would never have taken place, and the Buddha would have lived on to the end of this world-period!"

I asked what the good Ananda had to do with it, and in what way he had deserved such blame.

"In this way," answered the woman. "One day the Master rested with Ananda outside of the town, in the neighbourhood of the Capala temple. In the course of the conversation, the Master told Ananda that whosoever had developed the spiritual powers within him to perfection could, if he so desired, remain alive through a whole world-period. Oh, that simpleton Ananda, that he didn't at once, even with this plain hint, say, 'O that the Master would deign to remain alive throughout a world-period, to the salvation of many'! His spirit must have been possessed by Mara, the Evil One, seeing that he only preferred his request when it was too late."

"But how could it be too late," I asked, "seeing that the Master is yet alive?"

"Of that I will tell thee. Know then, that fifty years ago, when the Master had in Uruvela attained to his Buddha knowledge and, after seven years of strife, was enjoying the possession of sacred calm of spirit, he tarried under the Nyagrodha tree of the goat-herd, and there Mara, the Evil One, drew near to him, very much disturbed an account of the danger that threatened his kingdom in the person of the Buddha. In the hope of hindering the spread of the doctrine, he said: 'Hail to thee! The time has come for the Master to enter into Nirvana.' But the Buddha answered: 'Not before I have declared the doctrine to mankind shall I enter, thou Evil One, into Nirvana; not before I have enlisted disciples able to defend the doctrine from attack and to proclaim it further. I shall only then, thou Evil One, enter into Nirvana when the Kingdom of Truth stands on firm foundations.'

"But after the Master had here, at the sanctuary of Capala, spoken as I have told thee to Ananda, and he, without comprehending the hint, had gone away, Mara, the Evil One, approached the Master and said to him: 'Hail to thee! The time has at length come for the Master to enter into Nirvana. All that the Master formerly spoke of under the Nyagrodha tree of the goat-herd at Uruvela, as necessary to his entering Nirvana, is now fulfilled. The Kingdom of Truth rests on sure foundations. I trust that the Master will now enter into Nirvana.' Then the Buddha answered Mara, the Evil One, thus: 'Fear not, thou Evil One! The Nirvana of the Perfect One will soon take place; after three months have passed the Perfect One will enter into Nirvana.' At these

words the earth trembled, as thou wilt thyself, probably, have noticed."

As a matter of fact, we had felt a slight earthquake in Kosambi about a month before I left the sacred grove, and this I now told her.

"Dost thou see," exclaimed the woman excitedly, "it has been felt—everywhere. The whole earth shook and the drums of the gods emitted groans as the Perfect One waived his claim to longer life. Ah! if that simple-minded Ananda had but understood in time the hint so plainly given him! For when, wakened by the earthquake from his self-absorption, he came back to the Master and begged that he would consent to remain alive for the rest of this world-period, the Master had of course already given his word to Mara, and had renounced his claim to longer life."

From these speeches of the pious but somewhat superstitious woman, I gathered that the Master had, during his stay in Vesali, felt symptoms of approaching death, and had, in all likelihood, told the disciples that he would shortly die.

So I could no longer bear to remain patiently under her hospitable roof. I must reach the Buddha before he should leave us. That had always been our one great comfort, that we were able to turn to him, the inexhaustible source of truth. He alone could solve all the doubts of my troubled soul; only he, out of all the world, was able to restore to me the peace which I had once tasted, as I sat at his feet, in front of the old temple of Krishna, in the Sinsapa wood at Kosambi.

So, when ten days had passed, and my strength made travelling to some extent possible, we started. My good hostess, whose conscience troubled her at allowing me to

go farther in my weak condition, I comforted with the promise that I would lay a greeting from her at the feet of the Master. We now continued our journey in a north-westerly direction, in the Master's, which we found the more recent the farther we were able, aided by the information gathered from place to place, to advance.

In Ambagana he had been just eight days earlier; the Sala grove of Bhoganagara he had left to betake himself to Pava, three days before we arrived there.

Early one afternoon, and very tired, we reached the latter place.

The first house that attracted our attention belonged to a coppersmith, as could be seen from the great variety of metal wares ranged along the wall. But no blow of a hammer resounded from it; the inmates seemed to be keeping holiday, and at the well in the courtyard dishes and platters were being washed by the servants as though a marriage had just taken place.

Suddenly a little man in festive garb came forward and begged courteously to be allowed to fill our alms-bowls.

"If you had come a few hours earlier," he added, "then I should have had two additional welcome and honoured guests, for your Master, the Buddha, with his monks, dined with me to-day."

"So the Master is still here in Pava, then?"

"Not any longer, most honoured sister," answered the coppersmith. "Immediately after the meal the Master was taken with a violent illness and severe pains, which brought him near to fainting, so that we were all greatly frightened. But the Master rallied from the attack and started for Kusinara about an hour ago."

I should have preferred to go at once, for what the smith

said about this attack caused me to anticipate the worst. But it was an imperative necessity to strengthen ourselves not only with food, but by a short interval of rest.

The road from Pava to Kusinara it was not possible to miss. It soon led us away from the cultivated fields, through tiger-grass and undergrowth ever deeper into the jungle. We waded through a little river and refreshed ourselves somewhat by bathing. After a few minutes' pause we started on again. Evening was approaching, and it was with difficulty that I managed to drag myself farther.

Medini tried to persuade me to spend the night on a little bit of rising ground under a tree. There was no such great hurry.

"This Kusinara is, I expect, not much more than a village, and seems to be quite buried in the jungle. How canst thou imagine that the Master will die here? He will assuredly pass away some time in the Jetavana Park at Sravasti, or in either one of his groves at Rajagriha; but the life of the Master will certainly not go out in this desert. Who has ever heard of Kusinara?"

"It may be that people will hear of Kusinara from this day forward," I said, and went on.

But my strength was soon so terribly exhausted that I was forced to bring myself to climb the nearest treeless height in the hope of being able to see from it the neighbourhood of Kusinara. Otherwise we should be obliged to spend the night up there where we were less exposed to the attacks of beasts of prey and snakes, and would also be to a certain extent immune from fever-producing vapours.

Arrived at the summit, we looked in vain for some sign of human dwellings. In seemingly endless succession

the slopes of the jungle rose before us, like a carpet that is gradually being drawn upward. Soon, however, tall trees emerged from the low undergrowth, the thick leafy masses of a virgin forest rose dome-like one above another, and in a dark glade foamed an unruly brook, the same stream in whose silently flowing waters we had a short time before bathed.

The whole day through, the air had been sultry and the sky overcast. Here, however, we were met by a fresh breeze, and the landscape grew ever clearer as though one veil after another were being lifted before our eyes.

Huge walls of rock towered skyward above the woods, and higher yet like a roof above them were piled green mountain-tops—forest-clad peaks, they must have been, though they looked like so many mossy cushions—and ever higher, till they seemed to disappear in Heaven itself.

One solitary far-stretching cloud of soft red hue—one, and only one—floated above.

Even as we gazed at it this cloud began to glow strangely. It recalled the past when I had seen my father take a piece of purified gold out of the furnace with the pincers and, after cooling, lay it on a background of light-blue silk, for so did this luminous air-picture now shine forth in sharply defined surfaces of burnished gold; while, in between, vaporous strips of bright green deepened and shot downward in fan-shaped patches until, becoming gradually paler, they plunged into the colourless stratum of air beneath, as though desirous of reaching the verdure-clad mountain-tops that lay below. Ever redder grew the golden surfaces, ever greener the shadows.

That was no cloud.

"The Himavat," whispered Medini, overawed and deeply moved, as her hand tremblingly sought my arm.

Yes, there he rose before us, the mountain of mountains, the place of eternal snows, the abode of the gods, the resting-place of the holy ones! The Himavat—even in childhood this name had filled me with feelings of deep fear and reverence, with a mysterious prescience of the Sublime One! How often had I heard in legends and tales the sentence—"And he betook himself to the Himavat and lived the life of an ascetic there!" Thousands upon thousands had climbed these heights—seekers after salvation—in order amid the loneliness of the mountains to reach eternal happiness by means of their penance—each with his own special delusion; and now He was approaching—the One Being, among them all, free from delusion—He whose footsteps we were following.

As I stood there, lost in thought, the luminous picture was suddenly extinguished, as though heaven had absorbed it into itself.

I felt myself, however, so wonderfully animated and strengthened by the sight that I no longer thought of rest.

"Even if the Master," I said to Medini, "were to precede us to yonder summit in order to pass from that lofty station to the highest of the regions above, I would yet follow and reach him."

And, full of courage, I walked on. We had not, however, been half an hour on the way when suddenly the undergrowth ceased, and cultivated land lay before us. It was already quite dark and the full moon rose large and glowing above the wood which lay opposite when we at last reached Kusinara.

It was really not much more than a village of the Mallas with walls and houses of stamped clay and wicker-work. My first impression was that a devastating sickness must

have depopulated the little township. At the doors of the houses sat several old and sick people who wailed loudly.

We asked them what had happened.

"Ah!" they exclaimed, wringing their hands. "Soon, all too soon, the Master dies. This very hour, the light of the world will be extinguished. The Mallas have gone to the Sala grove to see and worship the Sacred One. For, shortly before sunset, Ananda came into our town and betook himself to the market where the Mallas were debating a public matter, and said: 'This very day, before the hour of midnight, O Mallas, the Master will enter Nirvana. See that ye do not later have to reproach yourselves, saying: "In our town, a Buddha died, and we did not take advantage of the opportunity to visit the Perfect One in his last hours."' Upon which all of the Mallas with their wives and children went out moaning and lamenting to the Sala grove. We, however, are too old and weak; we are obliged to remain behind here, and cannot worship the Master in his last hours."

We immediately had the way from the town to the Sala grove pointed out to us, but, finding it already filled with crowds of returning Mallas, we preferred to hurry across the fields, towards a corner of the little wood.

As we reached it we saw a monk leaning against the trunk of a tree and weeping. Deeply affected, I stopped, and at that instant he raised his face towards heaven. The full moonlight fell upon the pain-filled lineaments, and I recognised Ananda.

"Then I have arrived too late—ah me!" I said to myself, and I felt my strength leaving me.

Just then, however, I heard a rustling in the bush, and

saw a gigantic monk step forward and lay his hand upon Ananda's shoulder.

" Brother Ananda, the Master calls for thee."

So I was really, then, to see the Buddha in his last moments, after all! At once my strength returned and rendered me capable of following.

That instant Angulimala observed and recognised us. Reading his troubled glance aright, I said—

" Have no fear, brother, that we shall disturb the last moments of the Perfect One by loud weeping and female cries. We have taken no rest by the way from Vesali, here, in order that we might see the Master once again. Do not refuse us admission to him; we will be strong."

On which he signed to us to follow them.

We did not have far to go.

In a little glade of the forest, there were perhaps two hundred monks collected, who stood around in a semi-circle. In their midst rose two Sala trees—one splendid mass of white blossoms—and, beneath them, on a bed of yellow cloaks spread out between the two trunks, rested the Perfect One, his head supported on his right arm. And the blossoms rained softly down upon him.

Behind him, I saw in spirit the pinnacles of the Himavat rise, clad in their eternal snows and now veiled in the darkness of night, and I seemed to catch again the dreamlike glimpse I had just enjoyed, and to which I owed it that I now stood here, in the presence of the Perfect One. And the unearthly glow which had come to me with such a greeting across the distances flashed towards me again, in spiritual glorification, from His face. He also, the Master, appeared, even as though those floating cloudlike peaks, not to belong to this earth

at all; and yet he had, like them, climbed up from the same earth-level, which bears us all, to those immeasurable spiritual heights whence he was about to disappear from the sight of gods and men.

He spoke first of all to Ananda, who now stood before him.

"I know well, Ananda, that thou wert weeping in lonely grief, and that thy thought was: 'I am not yet free from sin; I have not yet reached the goal, and my Master is about to enter into Nirvana—he who pitied me.' But put such thoughts from thee, Ananda—neither complain, nor lament. Have I not told thee already, Ananda?—from all that one holds dear, one must part. How were it possible, Ananda, that it should be otherwise, that that which comes into existence should not pass out of it—that what is joined together should not be sundered—what is composed not be decomposed? But thou, Ananda, hast long honoured the Perfect One, in love and in kindness, with thy whole heart, gladly and without guile. Thou hast done well. Strive earnestly, and thou wilt soon be free from carnal desires, from selfishness, and from delusion."

As if to show that he was no longer allowing grief to overcome him, Ananda, commanding his voice by sheer force of will, now asked what the disciples were to do with the Master's mortal remains.

"Let that in no way trouble thee," answered the Buddha. "There are wise and pious disciples among the nobles, among the Brahmans, among the citizen heads of families—they will pay the last honours to the mortal remains of the Perfect One. But thou hast more important things to do. Think of the immortal, not of the mortal; speed forward, look not back."

And as he let his glance wander around the circle and looked at each one individually, he added—

"It may be, my disciples, that your thought is: 'The Word has lost its Master; we have no longer a Master.' But this ye are not to think. The doctrine, my disciples, which I have taught you, that will be your Master, when I am gone. Therefore, cling to no external support. Hold fast to the doctrine as a support! Be your own light, your own support."

Me also he noticed then—full of pity did the look of the All-Pitiful One rest on me, and I felt that my pilgrimage had not been in vain.

After a short time he spoke again—

"It might perhaps be, my disciples, that in some one of you a doubt should arise with regard to the Master or with regard to the doctrine. Ask freely, disciples, in order that ye may not have to reproach yourselves later, that ye may not say: 'The Master was with us, face to face, and we did not ask him.'"

Thus he spoke, and gave to every one the opportunity of speaking, but all remained silent.

How, indeed, could a doubt have remained in the presence of the parting Master? Lying there, with the gentle light of the moon flowing over him—as though heavenly genii were preparing his last bath; rained upon by the falling blossoms—as though earth were bewailing her loss; in the midst of the deeply moved band of disciples, himself unmoved, quiet, cheerful; who did not feel that this Perfectly Holy One had for ever cast off all imperfections, had overcome all evil? What is called "the visible Nirvana," that we saw before us, in the luminous features of the departing Buddha.

Ananda, stirred to the very depths of his soul, folded his hands and said—

"How wonderful, of a truth, O Master, is this. Verily,

I believe, in this whole assembly, there is not even one in whom a doubt lives."

And the Sublime One answered him—

"Out of the fulness of thine own faith hast thou spoken, Ananda. But I know that there is not a doubt in any one. Even he, who was most backward, has been enlightened, and will finally reach the goal."

As he uttered this promise, it assuredly seemed to each one of us as though a powerful hand were opening the Gateway of Eternity to him.

Once again the lips parted that had given to the world the highest—the final—truth.

"Hear then, O disciples! verily, I say unto you, fleeting is all form. Labour and rest not."

These were the Master's last words.

XLIV

VASITTHI'S BEQUEST

AND they were the last I heard on earth.

My life-force was exhausted; fever held my senses in thrall. Like fleeting dream-pictures, I still saw figures round about me—Medini's face often near to mine. Then everything became dark. Suddenly, however, it seemed as if a cool bath were extinguishing my burning fever. I felt as a traveller, standing on the brink of a pond in the blazing sun, may well imagine to himself the lotus feels when, wholly submerged in the cool water of the spring, it imbibes a refreshing draught through every fibre. At the same time it grew light overhead, and I saw there above me a great floating red lotus flower; and over its edge bent thy loved face. Then I ascended without effort and awoke beside thee in the Paradise of the West.

"And blessings on thee," said Kamanita, "that led by thy love, thou didst take that way. Where should I have now been, if thou hadst not joined me there? True, I don't know whether we shall be able to rescue ourselves out of the frightful wreckage of these ruined worlds—nevertheless, thou dost inspire me with confidence, for thou art seemingly as little disturbed by all these horrors as the sunbeam by the storm."

"He who has seen the greater, my friend, is not moved

by the less. And this, that thousands upon thousands of worlds should pass away, is of trifling import compared with the entering of a Perfected Buddha into Nirvana. For all this that we see around us is only a process of change, and all these beings will enter again into existence. Yonder hundred-thousand-fold Brahma who, burning with rage, resists the inevitable and, in all probability, regards even us enviously because we quietly continue to shine, he will reappear on some lower plane, while some aspiring human spirit will arise as the Brahma. Each being will be where the deepest desire of his heart and his spiritual force guide him. On the whole, however, everything will be as it was, neither better nor worse; because it will be created, as it were, out of the same material. For which reason I call this a very small matter. And, for the same reason, I consider it not only not frightful, but a matter of rejoicing to live through this wreck of worlds. For if this Brahma world were eternal, there would be nothing higher."

"Then thou knowest a higher than this Brahma world?"

"This Brahma world, as thou seest, passes away. But there is that which does not pass, which shall have no end, and which has had no beginning. 'There is,' says the Master, 'a place where there is neither earth nor water, neither light nor air, neither infinitude of space nor infinitude of consciousness, neither perception nor the lack of perception. That I call, ye disciples, neither coming nor going, neither birth nor death; that is the end of suffering, the place of rest, the land of peace, the invisible Nirvana.'"

"Help me, thou sweet and holy one, in order that we may rise again there, in the land of peace!"

"'That we shall rise again,' the Master has said, 'is not

true of that land;' and 'That we shall not rise again' is also not true. Any appellation by which thou dost make anything whatsoever tangible, and capable of being grasped, is untrue there."

"But what is the value to me of that which I cannot grasp?"

"Rather ask, is that which can be grasped, worth stretching out one's hand for?"

"Ah, Vasitthi, I verily believe I must at some time have murdered a Brahman or committed some similar crime that pursued me so cruelly with its retribution in the little street of Rajagriha. For if I had not been so precipitately thrust out of life there, I should have sat at the Master's feet, and would also assuredly have been present, as thou wert, at his Nirvana, and now I would have been as thou art. But come, Vasitthi—while thought and perception are yet ours, do this for love of me. Describe the Perfect One to me exactly, in order that I may see him in spirit, and thereby obtain what was not vouchsafed to me on earth. That will surely bring me peace."

"Gladly, my friend," answered Vasitthi. And she described to him the appearance of the Buddha, feature by feature, forgetting not the smallest detail.

But in a tone of deep discontentment, Kamanita said—

"Oh! Of what use are descriptions! What thou now sayest, could, all of it, just as well have been said of that old ascetic, of whom I have told thee that I spent the night with him in the hall of a potter at Rajagriha, and who, I imagine, was not quite so foolish as I believed, for he indeed, as I now perceive, said much that was true. Well then, Vasitthi, don't tell me anything more, but picture the Perfect One in spirit till thou seest him as when

thou didst behold him face to face, and it may be that, in consequence of our spiritual fellowship, I shall then share thy vision."

"Gladly, my friend."

And Vasitthi recalled the image of the Perfect One as he was about to enter into Nirvana.

"Dost thou see him, my dear one ?"

"Not yet, Vasitthi."

"I must make this mind-picture plastic," thought Vasitthi.

And she looked around her in immeasurable space where the Brahma world was in process of being extinguished.

Just as when some great master-founder, who has completed the mould of the glorious image of a god and finds that he hasn't metal enough to fill the mould, looks around him in his foundry and throws all that lies about him there—tiny images of the gods, figures, vases, and bowls, all his possessions, the work of his life—gladly and heartily into the smelting furnace, in order that he may be able to make a perfect cast of this one glorious divine image, so did Vasitthi look around her in immeasurable space, and all that there was left over of the paling light and dissolving forms of this Brahma world, she drew by her spiritual force to herself, thereby depopulating the whole of space, and this whole mass of astral matter she cast into the mould of her mind-picture and so created a colossal and luminous picture of the Perfect One, just as he was about to enter into Nirvana.

And when she saw this picture opposite to her there arose in her no longing and no sadness.

Yet even the great and holy Upagupta, when, by the magic art of Mara, the Evil One, he saw the form of the Buddha, after the latter had been long dead, even he was

filled with longing, so that he flung himself adoring at the feet of the deceptive apparition and, overcome by grief, wailed, " Woe upon this pitiless evanescence that dissolves even such glorious forms. For that splendid body of the Great and Holy One bowed to the law of change and has become a prey to destruction."

But not so Vasitthi.

Unmoved and self-possessed, she looked upon the likeness as an artist on his work, full of but one thought—to reveal it to Kamanita.

" Now I begin to see a figure," said the latter. "Oh, hold it fast, let it shine yet more clearly."

Whereupon Vasitthi again looked around her in space. In the midst of it there still remained the lurid and angry glow of the hundred-thousand-fold Brahma.

And Vasitthi rent by her spiritual force this highest deity from his place and banned him into the mould of the Buddha likeness, which immediately lighted up and grew animated like one who has enjoyed an invigorating draught.

" Now I see it more distinctly," said Kamanita.

It seemed to Vasitthi, however, that the Buddha spoke to her.

" So thou art come, my daughter. Art thou finished with thy sentence ? "

And as one answers in a dream, Vasitthi responded—

" I am finished with it, O Master."

" Right so, my daughter ! And the long way has not tired thee ? Dost thou still need the help of the Perfect One ? "

" No, O Master, I no longer need the help of the Perfect One."

" Right so, my daughter. Thou hast sought refuge in thyself, thou dost rest in thine own self, Vasitthi ? "

"I have learnt to know mine own self, O Master. As one rolls up the phyllodium of a pisang trunk and finds beneath it no sound wood from which anything firm can be made, so I have learned to know myself, a body of changing forms in which there is nothing eternal, nothing that offers permanence. And I give up this self of mine. 'That is not I, that does not belong to me' is the judgment I now pass upon myself."

"Right so, my daughter. Thou dost now cling firmly to the doctrine alone?"

"The doctrine, O Master, has brought me to my goal. As one, crossing a stream by means of a raft, neither clings to the raft when he has reached the farther side, nor drags it along with him, so I no longer cling to the doctrine but let it go."

"Right so, my daughter! Thus, clinging to nothing, attached to nothing, thou wilt rise again beside me in the Place of Peace."

"'That we shall rise again,' thou hast said is not true of that place, and 'That we shall not rise again' is also not true. And even the doctrine that neither is it true to say that we shall rise again nor yet to say that we shall not rise again—even this is itself not true. Nothing is true any longer, and, least of all, is nothingness true. So I understand at last."

Then the Buddha likeness smiled an illuminating smile.

"Now I am able to see the face," said Kamanita. "Like a reflection in flowing water I recognise it vaguely. Oh, hold it fast, steady it, Vasitthi."

Vasitthi looked around her in space.

Space was empty.

Then Vasitthi flung her own corporal substance into the astral mass of the vision.

Kamanita observed that Vasitthi had disappeared. But as one who is dying leaves a legacy, so had Vasitthi left to Kamanita the Buddha likeness, which remained alone with him in space and which he now clearly recognised.

"That old ascetic with whom I spent the night in Rajagriha and whom I blamed for his foolishness, that was the Perfect One! Oh fool that I was! Was there ever a greater fool than I? What I have been longing for as the highest happiness, as salvation itself, that I have already been in possession of for milliards of years."

Then the vision of the Buddha drew near like an oncoming cloud and enveloped him in a luminous mist.

XLV

NIGHT AND MORNING IN THE SPHERES

As in a banquet hall, when all the torches and lamps are extinguished, one little lamp is left burning before a sacred picture in a corner, so Kamanita was left behind, alone, in universal night.

For just as his body was enfolded by the astral substance of that Buddha likeness, so his soul was completely absorbed by the Buddha thought; and that was the oil which fed the flame of this little lamp.

The whole conversation he had had with the Master in the outer hall of the potter's house at Rajagriha rose up before him from beginning to end, sentence by sentence, word by word. But after he had gone quite through it, he began again at the beginning. And every sentence was to him like a gate that stood at the head of the way to new avenues of thought which, in their turn, led to others. And he explored them all with measured step, and there was nothing which remained dark to him.

And while his spirit, in such fashion, wove the Buddha thought into its own fabric until its last strand was exhausted, his body absorbed ever more of the astral matter which surrounded it, until what remained at last became transparent. And the darkness of universal night began to appear as a delicate blue that became ever darker.

Whereupon Kamanita thought—

"Out there reigns the vast darkness of universal night.

But a time will come when morning shall dawn and a new Brahma world come into existence. If my thoughts and acts were but to be directed towards becoming the hundred-thousand-fold Brahma whose office it will be to call the new world into existence, I do not see who would be likely to outrival me. For while all the beings of this Brahma world have sunk into helplessness and non-existence, I am here at my post, watchful, and in full possession of my faculties. Yes, I could if I so wished, at this instant, summon all those beings into life, each in his place, and begin the new world day. But one thing I could not do—I could never again call Vasitthi into being. Vasitthi has gone, in that passing away which leaves no seed of existence behind; neither god nor Brahma can find her. But what can life be to me without Vasitthi, who was its fairest and best? And what to me can a Brahma existence be, a life beyond which one is able to pass? And what the temporal, when there is an eternal?

"There is an eternal and a way to the eternal.

"An old forest Brahman once taught me that round about the heart a hundred fine arteries are spun, by means of which the soul is able to range throughout the whole body; that there is, however, but one which leads to the crown of the head—that one by which the soul leaves the body. So there are also a hundred, yes, a thousand and a hundred thousand ways which lead hither and thither in this world, through many scenes of suffering, both where the probation is of long, and where it is of short, duration, where all is beautifully appointed and where all is hatefully appointed, through divine and human worlds, through animal kingdoms and underworlds. But there is only one way which leads absolutely

out of this universe. That is the way to the eternal, the way to the untraversed land. I am now on that road. Well, then, I shall tread it to its end."

And he continued to dwell on the Buddha thought, of the way which leads to the end of all suffering.

And ever darker became the blue of the diaphanous universal night.

But when it began to grow almost black, the new Brahma flashed into existence, the hundred-thousand-fold Brahma, who illumines and preserves a hundred thousand worlds.

And the Brahma sent forth a joyous summons to awake.

"Wake up, ye beings, all who have rested throughout the whole of creation's night in the lap of nothingness! Hither, to form the new Brahma universe, to enjoy the new world day, each one in his place, each one according to his strength!"

And the beings and worlds came forth from the darkness of the void, star by star, and the jubilant shouts of a hundred thousand voices and the sound as of a hundred thousand drums and conch-horns rang in the answer—

"Hail! the hundred-thousand-fold Brahma who calls us to the new universe and the new day! Hail to us who are called to share the new day with him, and to reflect in bliss his divine glory!"

When Kamanita saw and heard all this he was filled with deep pity.

"These beings and these worlds, these stellar gods, and the hundred-thousand-fold Brahma himself shout for joy to welcome the world day—rejoice in life. And why? Because they do not know it."

And this pity of his with the world, with the gods, and with the supreme god, vanquished in Kamanita the last remnant of his self-love.

But he now considered—

"During this new day also, perfect Buddhas are certain to appear who will declare the truth. And when these divinities I see around me now, hear the truth with regard to their salvation, and remember that in the earliest dawn of the universal day they saw a being who went away out of the universe, then the memory will redound to their advantage. 'Already one from our midst—as it were a part of ourselves—has preceded us on that road,' they will say to themselves, and that will conduce to their salvation. So that I shall help all in helping myself. For no one can, in truth, help himself without helping all."

Very soon, some of the stellar gods, and, by and by, more of these, began to notice that there was one among them who did not shine like the others, ever brighter, but who, on the contrary, lost in brilliance.

And they called to him—

"Ho, there, brother! Turn thy gaze upon the great hundred-thousand-fold Brahma in order that thou mayst recover brilliance and shine like us. For thou also, brother, art called to the bliss of reflecting the glory of the supreme god."

When the gods called to him thus, Kamanita neither looked nor listened.

And the gods who saw him grow ever paler were very greatly troubled about him. And they appealed to Brahma.

"Great Brahma, Our Light and Preserver, oh look upon this poor creature who is too weak to shine even as we, whose brilliance decreases always and does not increase! Oh give him of thy care, illumine, revivify him! For him also hast thou surely called to reflect in bliss thy divine glory."

And the great Brahma, full of tenderness for all created beings, turned his attention to Kamanita to refresh and strengthen him.

But Kamanita's light, nevertheless, decreased visibly.

Then the great Brahma was more grieved that this one being would not suffer himself to be illumined by him and did not reflect his glory, than he was glad that a hundred thousand sunned themselves in his light and hailed him with shouts of joy.

And he withdrew a large part of his divinely illuminating power from the universe—power sufficient to set a thousand worlds on fire—and directed it on Kamanita.

But Kamanita's light continued to pale, as though drawing nearer to complete extinction.

Brahma now became a prey to great anxiety.

"This one star withdraws from my influence—so I am not then omnipotent. I do not know the way he is going, so I am not omniscient. For he is not expiring as do the beings who expire in death, to be reborn each according to his works; not as the worlds go out in the Brahma night, only to shine forth again. What light illumines his way, seeing that he disdains mine? So there is then another light more luminous than mine? And a road which leads in the opposite direction to mine—a road to the untraversed land? Shall I myself, mayhap, ever take that road—that path to the untraversed land?"

And now the minds of the stellar gods also became filled with great anxiety, great trouble.

"This one withdraws from the power of the great Brahma, so then the great Brahma is not omnipotent? What light can be lighting his way, seeing that he disdains that of the great Brahma? So there is then another light more splendid than that which we so blissfully

reflect? And a road that leads in the opposite direction to ours—a road to the untraversed land? Shall we, mayhap, ever take that road—the road to the untraversed land?"

Then the hundred-thousand-fold Brahma pondered—

"My mind is made up. I shall re-absorb my illuminating power, now diffused throughout space, and shall plunge all these worlds again into the darkness of the Brahma night. And when I have gathered my light into a single ray, I shall turn it upon that one being in order yet to rescue him for this my Brahma world."

And the hundred-thousand-fold Brahma now re-absorbed all the illuminating power which he had diffused throughout space, so that the worlds sank again into the darkness of the Brahma night. And gathering his light into a single ray he directed it on Kamanita.

"Henceforward there must shine at this point," he thought, "the most radiant star in all my Brahma world."

Then the hundred-thousand-fold Brahma drew his ray with sufficient illuminating power to set a hundred thousand worlds on fire, back into himself, and again diffused his light throughout the whole of space.

At the point, however, where he hoped to see the most radiant of all the stars, only a little, slowly dying spark was to be seen.

And while in immeasurable space, worlds upon worlds flashed and shouted as they pressed forward into the new Brahma day, the pilgrim Kamanita went out quite, as a lamp goes out when it has consumed the last drop of oil in its wick.

NOTE

It need scarcely be remarked that the few passages from the Upanishads are quoted from Professor Deussen's *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda.* To the second great translation of this excellent and indefatigable inquirer, *Die Sutras des Vedanta,* my tenth chapter owes its origin. If this curious piece is in substance a presentation of Indian *Uebermenschentum*—as the extreme antithesis to Buddhism—it is in its form a painfully accurate copy of the Vedantic Sutra style, with the enigmatic brevity of the text, the true principle of which—as Deussen has rightly recognised—consists in giving only catchwords for the memory, but never the words that are important to the sense. In this way the text could without danger be fixed in writing, since it was incomprehensible without the oral commentary of the teacher, which thus usually became all the more pedantically intricate. Indeed, these Kali-Sutras—like the whole Vajaçravas—are a jocular fiction of mine—but one, I believe, which will be granted by every student of ancient India, to be within the bounds of the possible—nay, of the probable. India is indeed the land where even the robber must philosophise.

KARL GJELLERUP.

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